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After Seattle:

A NEW INTERNATIONALISM?

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We would like to thank Ellen Meiksins Wood and Michael Yates for their help at different stages in the development of this special issue. Ellen proposed the idea of having such an issue this summer, initiated it, and started the ball rolling by sending invitations defining the issue to the bulk of the contributors included here. Michael worked mightly, editing manuscripts and helping bring the project to fruition. We owe a debt of gratitude to them both.

(continued on inside back cover)

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Toward a New Internationalism

by the Editors

History, as if to warn us continuously against any tendency toward complacency, is full of ironies. As recently as a few months ago, the close of the twentieth century had come to be associated, in the prevailing view of the vested interests, with "endism:" the end of class struggle, the end of revolution, the end of imperialism, the end of dissent—even the end of history. The new century and new millennium were supposed to symbolize that all of this had been left behind and that we could look forward to a new era of infinite progress based on the New Economy of the information age, which would usher in a gentler, kinder, virtual capitalism. The main worry was a technical glitch known as Y2K. Would computers across the world malfunction on January 1, 2000?

Hence, the powers that be could not have been more surprised when, at the end of November 1999, massive protests involving seven hundred organizations and upwards of forty thousand people—workers, environmentalists, students, religious groups, etc.—suddenly brought the World Trade Organization (WTO) meetings in Seattle to a halt, grabbing not only the nation's but the entire world's spotlight. There had been large militant protests against globalization before—against the WTO and its sister institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. What was startling this time around, though, was that such massive, militant protests took place in the United States, the stronghold of global capitalism. For most people in

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the world, the Seattle protests—and, even more, the unleashing of forces of repression which broadcasted an image of "fortress America"—demonstrated what had perhaps been long-forgotten: that there are forces of resistance and international solidarity in the United States. The protests exposed as a lie the carefully cultivated, widely projected image of the United States as a hegemonic power lacking internal social contradictions. Hope suddenly dawned of a new internationalism—the struggle for an alternative future—emerging along with the new millennium. Suddenly, the question heroically raised only a year ago by Daniel Singer's book, *Whose Millennium?: Theirs or Ours?*, seemed to have leaped from his book to the pages of history itself.

Seattle itself is now old news. But in subsequent months, the rays of hope that it helped to bring into being have not died away; they have only increased, along with what appears to be a rapidly growing movement. The first months of 2000 have seen impressive demonstrations on university and college campuses across the country, as students have protested against university licensing agreements with corporations such as Nike, Reebok, the Gap, and Disney that rely on sweatshop labor located in the third world to produce their products. In Washington, DC, in April, mass protests against the IMF and the World Bank required extraordinary procedures to keep these global institutions of capital working.

One of the most important developments in this period of growing rebellion has been the partial revival of the labor movement that is finally showing signs of attempting to chart a new course. The fact that the AFL-CIO took a central role in the anti-WTO protests in Seattle is a concrete indication of this. The focus on organizing initiated by the New Voices leadership has renewed hope that organized labor is at last rising phoenix-like from its ashes and that the long decline in membership will be reversed. The AFL-CIO has also backed away from continuing a history of Cold-War labor alliances, opening the way to a broader labor internationalism—a shift that first appeared as a result of the anti-NAFTA struggle. The emergence of a labor-popular movement alliance, of a kind and a scale not seen since the 1930s,

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now seems possible.

What makes this new era of protest so distinctive is that it is aimed not so much at the state (as in the sixties) but at global corporations and international economic institutions, and thus raises fundamental issues about class power and international solidarity with third-world workers. It also demonstrates the capacity of labor, environmentalist, and other left forces to act in tandem when confronted by the commonly perceived threat of a globalizing economy. Many—if still far from a majority—of those engaged in the struggle in the United States have extended their criticisms of corporate globalization to a critique of global capitalism in general.

But the obstacles to a successful challenge to neoliberal globalization are enormous. Perhaps the biggest such obstacle is the ideological hegemony exerted by the capitalist order, which attempts to channel such mass revolts into largely meaningless efforts to reform particular institutional arrangements while the underlying structure of power remains unquestioned. Here we are immediately faced by the reality that much—in the United States, *most*—of this new wave of protest, insofar as it takes an articulated form, is directed at corporate globalization rather than global capitalism. A great deal of the confusion surrounding the concept of "globalization"—especially when regarded as the key concept for understanding contemporary trends—stems from the fact that it is often seen as a reality that has displaced capitalism, the nation-state, imperialism, and class struggle. In this sense, it becomes a grand, all-encompassing, culturally defined ideal-type. For establishment pundits like *New York Times* foreign affairs columnist Thomas Friedman, author of *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (1999), globalization is a new technological-economic system based in the microchip and ruled by an "electronic herd" of financial investors and multinational corporations, sweeping away everything that came before.

Naturally, critics of globalization reject this narrow, technologically determined view that declares all resistance futile. Nevertheless, uncritical acceptance of the notion that globalization as an entity in itself is somehow the underlying force now trans-

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forming the world is appearing everywhere, even on the left. This idea carries with it certain built-in assumptions: (1) there is no alternative to the present world economic order—or, in other words, capitalism itself (as distinguished from globalization) is no longer in question, and socialism no longer a possibility; (2) the global economic landscape is a constellation formed primarily by multinational corporations, international finance, and a few international economic institutions such as the WTO, the IMF, and the World Bank; (3) the only real oppositional force is a collection of nongovernmental organizations that represent "global civil society;" and (4) the goal is to reverse neoliberal policy and make corporations and the key international economic institutions more democratic and responsive to human rights. Sometimes we also hear, in a radical mirror-image of the Thomas Friedman argument, that the change that has occurred with the rise of the microchip and the consequent globalization is the creation of a new international of capital. In this view, not only is the nation-state thought to have been displaced economically, but national struggle is considered largely ineffective.

Confusion about the basic workings of imperialism is a crucial ideological obstacle to internationalism today. The period of neoliberal economic restructuring in response to decades of stagnation has undermined the living conditions of workers everywhere and has provided the objective basis for a renewal of internationalism. Workers are faced with a greater necessity and, at the same time, a greater possibility of building international solidarity than at any time since the Second World War. Yet the idea of globalization has often been promoted in such a way that the suggestion is that what has changed is the fact that third-world economies and populations are gaining at the expense of workers in the United States and other rich countries, as U.S. plants are shifted to the third world. Rather than promoting genuine international solidarity, this frequently leads to debilitating forms of economic nationalism. If around half of the U.S. population, as a series of recent polls have revealed, are currently critical of globalization and the WTO (suggesting that an antiglobalization politics has a vast constituency to draw upon), there

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are reasons to be cautious about what this means. Many of those who have adopted this position have done so on the basis of a strong nationalist viewpoint, which obscures the realities of imperialism—even more so in fact now that globalization (not capitalism) has become the main area of concern.

Viewed in this context, the AFL-CIO's decision to hold a rally in Washington, DC, against most-favored-nation status for China, and to demand that China not be admitted to the WTO—only a few days before the April 16th and 17th protests in Washington against the IMF and the World Bank—symbolized a tendency to exploit sentiments of economic nationalism, fear of imperialism in reverse, and even the xenophobia of many workers. To be sure, this stance is being taken in the name of workers' rights and human rights (although outside of any strong alliance with Chinese workers). But it has also served as a powerful diversion—since labor chose to put its weight on the side of the anti-China lobby, joining with the Republican Right in denying most-favored-nation and WTO status to China, rather than getting solidly behind the anti-IMF and anti-World Bank protests.

Organized labor in the United States today remains wedded to the Democratic Party, and hence to one wing of the business party, as the AFL-CIO's early support of Gore indicates. Its overall structure and emphasis is still one of business unionism. It has not yet attempted to transform itself into a political or social movement. Nevertheless, objective forces seem to be pushing labor toward a new radicalism, and radical, rank-and-file labor activists are clearly in motion. More than any time in the post-Second World War period, a genuine internationalism is rapidly making gains within labor's ranks. It is these internal battles within labor—between business unionism and democratic unionism, between economic nationalism and internationalism—that will largely determine the future of U.S. labor: both the effectiveness of the U.S. workers in the class struggle nationally and in the larger internationalist struggle of workers against global capital.

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Globalization and Crisis

The prospects for the reemergence of radical struggle depend ultimately on the larger evolution of the world capitalist economy. We therefore need to analyze the laws of motion of capitalism in our time—in ways that neither succumb to the dominant view that changes in the scale and workings of the system have eliminated the possibility of fundamental change, nor deny the existence of new constraints on our action. Above all two issues have to be addressed: globalization and the prospects for a new internationalism.

Capitalism has always been a globalizing system. As Marx and Engels pointed out in *The Communist Manifesto*, it has a tendency to penetrate every nook and cranny of the globe. In the opening decades of the twentieth century, world trade and capital flows as a proportion of world production and savings, respectively, were on a scale comparable to today. What intervened to break those international economic linkages was the Age of Crisis, represented by the First World War, the Great Depression, and the Sceond World War. It is only in the last few decades that global trade and capital flows—as a share of world production and savings, respectively—have again risen to the scale preceding the First World War. One thing that this ought to tell us is that there is a relation of globalization of economic activity to the globalization of crisis. Increased transnational economic activity does not mean that the laws of motion of the system have been dispensed with and that capitalism has transcended its contradictions. Rather, it reveals that the more globalized the system, the greater the danger of global waves of crisis.

This was illustrated quite dramatically as recently as July 1997. In that month, two influential periodicals in the United States raised the question of the end of the business cycle and the unleashing of a process of almost infinite economic expansion rooted in the information technology revolution. One of these periodicals was *Foreign Affairs*, the leading journal of the U.S. foreign policy establishment, which published an article entitled "The End of the Business Cycle?" The answer given in the article

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was that the question mark needed to be dropped—"globalization of production and consumption have reduced the volatility of economic activity in the industrialized world." The other journal was *Wired*, a periodical which has come to symbolize the heady optimism of the information revolution and the so-called "New Economy." Here, in an article that read like advertising copy, readers were exposed to a wildly enthusiastic discussion of "The Long Boom: A History of the Future" that gloried in the "transition to a networked economy and a global society"—one which would produce steadily rising world economic growth rates.

Yet, one of history's numerous ironies intervened at this point. On July 2, 1997, only two days into the very month in which these articles declaring the business cycle to be over were published, Thailand devalued the *baht*, commencing what came to be known as the "hot phase" of the Asian economic crisis, which spread rapidly from country to country and shook the entire capitalist world economy. Suddenly, globalization seemed to stand not so much for a new stable world order but for the globalization of capitalist crises on a world scale not seen since the Great Depression.

Each of the major assumptions of globalization as a process of rationalization of world capitalism were immediately called into question—as if a veil had suddenly been stripped away from the system. The idea that all countries were essentially in the same boat and that imperialism no longer existed was contradicted by the speed with which capital based in the core countries proceeded to take advantage of the "fire sale" in Southeast Asia to grab assets. The inability of nations to intervene in a globalizing world economy was called into question by Malaysia's decision to impose capital controls—without the predicted disaster following. The end of class struggle and the weakness of labor in the face of globalization pressures was refuted by the mass uprising of Korean workers in defiance of the IMF. The image of a smooth globalizing process that would end in a rational treatment of global environmental problems was symbolically undermined as Indonesia's forests burst into flames at a speed that matched its economic crisis. The fantasy that globalization is a

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process controlled by a handful of corporations, international institutions and Friedman's "electronic herd" was dispelled by the systematic nature of crisis of accumulation and the vast range of financial speculation, revealed as economic distress spread around the world—from Southeast Asia to Japan, Russia, and Brazil. Above all, neoliberalism—the idea that everything should be left to the self-regulating market—was shown to be not simply a form of instrumental rationality directed at shared goals, but an ideology of those in power.

At present, the world economic crisis, centered in Asia, has abated, "but not before," as *Fortune* magazine (May 15, 2000) put it, "millions were reduced to the poverty many of them had so recently escaped." The world power-structure, so visibly shaken by the Asian crisis as recently as two years ago, has now by all appearances largely forgotten it. Yet, even a mainstream commentator like economist Paul Krugman reminds us in his *The Return of Depression Economics* that the underlying problems generating instability have not gone away, and that we may be simply waiting for the third act of a three-act play: the first in Mexico in 1995, the second in Asia in 1997 and 1998, and the third yet to occur.

Perhaps this third act has already begun. For the real third act in these events may not be an economic one (which is surely to come) but a resurgence of social revolt. The tarnished image of globalization arising from these world outbreaks of crisis and the militant responses that this has engendered among populations throughout the globe—from Korean workers to Mexican students to anti-WTO protesters in the United States—demonstrate that neither are forces of production all-powerful nor social relations in complete abeyance. This can be contrasted to the view of Perry Anderson, writing in the January–February 2000 issue of *New Left Review*, who states that "the only revolutionary force at present capable of disturbing its [capital's] equilibrium appears to be scientific progress itself—the forces of production, so unpopular with Marxists convinced of the primacy of relations of production when the socialist movement was still alive." For Anderson, revolutionary social relations are no more. The pro-

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ductive forces of capital reign supreme. But this is too defeatist. We do not know what may result from this new, increasingly internationalist phase of struggle but the fact that such struggles are occurring, and are increasingly directed at the system itself, tells us that millions of people worldwide are stirring.

Those on the left who have abandoned all hope in social relations or who, in desperation, have turned to the idea that only global (no longer national) struggle is now possible and that we have to think and act in cosmopolitan terms—as a "global civil society"—are simply the dialectical twins of those who preach that globalization has ended all possibility of change. What has really disappeared is the kind of middle-ground, mixed economy often lauded in the Cold-War years. Social democratic and Keynesian strategies, supposedly the result of a class accord, are no longer viable under today's global neoliberalism. But all of this merely points to the need for a much more radical, universal, internationalist strategy, rooted in national realities and struggles as the only way forward for the movement.

If this is the case, then a host of organizational and strategic issues have to be engaged directly—which is the purpose of this special issue, where we address some of the following topics: Peter Marcuse questions the term "globalization" itself, pointing to the ideological baggage associated with the most common conceptions of the word. Bill Tabb asks, "What is the nature of the present movement against globalization?" Martin Hart-Landsberg and Patrick Bond explore what new strategies this movement might adopt. David Bacon, Khalil Hassan, and Michael Yates pose the question, "How is the labor movement to break out of its old Cold-War stagnation and generate a more radical and internationalist phase of struggle appropriate to the neoliberal era?" Elizabeth Martinez and Fidel Castro discuss the ways in which we can cross divides formed by the color line and imperialism, and John Foster wonders, "What is the historical legacy of internationalism that we can turn to?"

The greatest danger under these circumstances is to believe that these organizational and strategic issues are beyond reach, that nothing will or can happen, that there is no alternative. Here

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we encounter another of history's ironic wake-up calls. In the aftermath of the anti-WTO protests, and even more so following the protests against the IMF and the World Bank in April, the mainstream press sought to mock the efforts of the growing grassroots movement, which was caricatured as consisting mainly of untutored youth and "flat-earth advocates" of no particular significance. Such views could be seen in the *New York Times,* the *Washington Post, Newsweek,* and *Time,* together with the various network broadcasting outlets. The antiglobalization movement is portrayed as a movement without a history or a future, irrelevant to the future course of events—merely an irritant, or a temporary roadblock at best.

Yet, the more astute *Fortune* (May 15, 2000) recognized that support for these protests is very broad—so broad that even elements of the establishment are echoing some of the sentiments expressed, in an attempt to get ahead of the parade and redirect it. "The movement appears to have legs. The world's financial and corporate elites would do well to listen up," the magazine opined. For *Fortune,* it is clear that the direction of globalization, if not capitalist globalization itself, is at stake: "New technologies will continue to make the world a smaller place no matter what, but economic integration is still very much driven by discrete political decisions. 'The rules are not predetermined,' says Harvard economist Dani Rodrik. 'Globalization is not something that's just falling into our laps from another planet.'"

If *Fortune* has thus articulated the fears of capital when faced with this growing movement, our role is to articulate the hopes of the larger population—of all those who seek a more humane, democratic, and egalitarian future. But more than mere hope is called for. On the left, much will depend on our analysis and organization. It is to these ends that this special issue of *MR* is dedicated.

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Marx and Internationalism

by John Bellamy Foster

It is not uncommon within social science today to acknowledge that Karl Marx was one of the first analysts of globalization. But what is usually forgotten, even by those who make this acknowledgment, is that Marx was also one of the first strategists of working-class internationalism, designed to respond to capitalist globalization. The two major elements governing such internationalism, in his analysis, were the critique of international exploitation and the development of a working-class movement that was both national and international in its organization. A scrutiny of Marx's views at the time of the First International offers useful insights into the struggle to forge a new internationalism in our own day.

The First Condition of Internationalism

It has often been assumed that Marx believed that capitalism's colonial penetration of the global periphery operated as a purely progressive force, which would result in economic and social development in these countries along lines already pioneered by the countries at the center of the capitalist world system. There is no doubt that he concluded that social formations in certain parts of the world had taken on stagnant forms that blocked further development—one of the main implications of his concept of the "Asiatic mode of production."[1] The external penetra-

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tion of capitalism into such countries could therefore serve to break this stagnation and to provide the initial material prerequisites for a wider development. But, although this theme was repeatedly introduced in his early discussions of economic and social "backwardness," he did not thereby downplay the terrible history of capitalist exploitation of these societies or the necessity for social revolt by indigenous populations. Rather, Marx—with his usual dialectical imagination—not only condemned colonialism from the standpoint of those who suffered from it, but also drew on Hegel's "cunning of reason" to argue that such capitalist penetration was providing the bare material preconditions, which, when coupled with social revolution, opened the way to historical advance—an advance which might take more complex and variegated forms, he seemed to suggest, than in Europe.

In his later years, from the days of the formation of the First International and the writing of *Capital* in the 1860s up to the end of his life, Marx was far less convinced that the Hegelian cunning of reason was operative here in any meaningful sense—that objective forces unleashed by colonialism were actually providing the material premises for development in colonized nations.[2] Instead, he became increasingly concerned about the role of international exploitation in creating a permanent structural relation of dependency of poor nations on rich nations—and the effect of this on working-class internationalism. Ireland, he observed, was sending its surplus—derived largely from agricultural production—over to England, where it was used to expand industrial production. Moreover, by 1881 (in the third draft of his letter to Vera Zasulich), he had come to the conclusion with respect to India that "the suppression of communal land ownership was nothing but an act of English vandalism which drove the indigenous population backward rather than forward." Although British imperial conquest in India had loosened the bonds of the old society, thus making rapid historical development possible, it also placed the Indian population in conditions of superexploitation. Thus, in a letter written in February 1881, Marx accounted for the situation in the greatest of Britain's colonial possessions as follows:

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> In *India* serious complications, if not a general outbreak, is in store for the British government. What the English take from them annually in the form of rent, dividends for railway useless to the Hindoos, pensions for military and civil servicemen, for Afghanistan and other wars, etc., etc.—what they take from them *without any equivalent* and *quite apart* from what they appropriate to themselves annually *within* India, speaking only of the *value of the commodities* the Indians have *gratuitously* and annually to send *over* to England, it amounts to *more than the total sum of income of the 60 millions of agricultural and industrial labourers of India!* This is a bleeding process, with a vengeance! The famine years are pressing each other and *in dimensions* till now not yet suspected in Europe!

The recognition that such extreme forms of exploitation lay at the core of the international system under capitalism, became (in Marx's more developed analysis) the first condition of genuine internationalism—an argument that he applied in particular to Ireland. "England today," he stated in a January 1870 circular from the General Council of the International, "is seeing a repetition of what happened on a gigantic scale in ancient Rome. A nation that enslaves another forges its own chains."[3] Indeed, for English workers, he wrote in a letter in April of that same year, "the *national emancipation of Ireland* is no question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment but *the first condition of their own social emancipation.*"

The Second Condition of Internationalism

The second condition of internationalism is the need to combine national and international struggle—each as the basis for the other. The First International, the International Working Men's Association, in which Marx was to play the leading role, had its historical roots in England in the general strike of London workers in 1859 in response to the economic crisis of 1857–1858, and in the radical trade-unionism engendered during that period. But it emerged more importantly out of the effects of the great cotton famine brought about by the U.S. Civil War, which suddenly confronted the British textile industry—upon which industrialization was originally based—with a chronic shortage of supply, the worst hardships of which were to be passed down to the workers. Around 80 percent of the raw

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cotton imported at that time into Britain came from the United States, from which the British textile industry was now cut off due to the Northern blockade of Confederate shipping. Although some of the larger textile manufacturers had supplies of cotton stocked up in their warehouses, many of the smaller manufacturers did not, and the sudden decline in imports created a set of diminished expectations that drove the industry into further crisis. Full-time employment in the Lancashire cotton industry dropped from 533, 950 workers in November 1861 to 203, 200 in November 1862.[4] It is due to this historical context—so crucial to the formation of the First International—that Marx declared in the Preface to *Capital*, volume 1, that "just as in the eighteenth century the American War of Independence sounded the tocsin for the European middle class, so in the nineteenth century the American Civil War did for the European working class."

The problem of proletarian organization, as conceived by European workers in the 1860s, was both a national and international one. What impressed Marx the most about the English working class in the early 1860s, leading up to the formation of the First International, was the fact that in public meeting after public meeting in 1862 and 1863, workers from Manchester to London organized in opposition to active British support for the slave South—helping to block the clearly marked intentions of Lord Palmerston, the British Prime Minister, to intervene militarily in the U.S. Civil War. This action on the part of the workers went against their own immediate economic interests and was, as Marx wrote to Engels on April 9, 1863, "an act almost without precedent" in the history of the working class.[5] Marx himself attended the mass meeting of the London Trades' Union Council in March 1863, in which the skilled workers of London proclaimed their support for the war against slavery and opposition to British intervention on the side of the Confederacy. This meeting was critical to the founding of the International. The First International thus arose not simply out of a national crisis but out of an historical act of international worker solidarity. (The population of the North in the United States, for their part, responded to this act of solidarity on the part of English working-class

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by sending shiploads of aid to the distressed workers of Lancashire.)

It is true that other, slightly later developments were to play more immediate roles in the founding of the International—which was influenced also by the efforts of European workers to offer support to Italian and Polish liberation struggles and was finally sparked by the threat on the part of capital to bring in foreign workers from France, Belgium, and Germany to act as strikebreakers in the war against British trade unionism.[6] But Marx left no doubt that he considered the international solidarity demonstrated in the British working class' active support for the war against slavery to be the most important historical development leading to the formation of the International.

In his Inaugural Address to the First International in October 1864, Marx used these actions on the part of the English workers as an example of the need to establish an independent, working-class foreign policy that would counter the worldwide exploitative ends of capital:

> If emancipation of the working classes requires their fraternal concurrence, how are they to fulfill that great mission with a foreign policy in pursuit of criminal designs, playing upon national prejudices, and squandering in piratical wars the people's blood and treasure? It was not the wisdom of the ruling classes, but the heroic resistance to their criminal folly by the working classes of England, that saved the west of Europe from plunging headlong into an infamous crusade for the propagation of slavery on the other side of the Atlantic.

This showed, Marx contended, that history had already

> taught the working classes the duty to master themselves the mysteries of international politics; to watch the diplomatic acts of their respective governments; to counter them, if necessary, by all means in their power; when unable to prevent, to combine in simultaneous denunciations, and to vindicate the simple laws of morals and justice, which ought to govern the relations of private individuals, as the rules paramount of the intercourse of nations.
>
> The fight for such a foreign policy forms part of the general struggle for the emancipation of the working classes.
>
> Proletarians of all countries, unite!

In the address that he drafted to Abraham Lincoln on behalf

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of the International only a month later, in November 1864, Marx eloquently praised the heroic stance taken by European workers in support of the North in the U.S. Civil War.[7] The workers, he insisted, understood that "their hopes for the future, even their past conquests were at stake in that tremendous conflict on the other side of the Atlantic. Everywhere they bore therefore patiently the hardships imposed upon them by the cotton crisis, opposed enthusiastically the proslavery intervention importunities of their betters—and, from most parts of Europe, contributed their quota of blood to the good cause." European workers provided their support not only to the slaves in the South but also to the workers of the North, who had realized that "they were unable to attain the true freedom of labor" as long as they went along with a system, corrupted by slavery, "which boasted it the highest prerogative of the white-skinned laborer to sell himself and choose his own master." It was the working people of the North, Marx argued, who were the real force insisting that "this barrier to progress" had to be "swept off by the red sea of civil war."

The call for international proletarian unity was not simply a call for the working class of one country to support the revolutionary activities of another, but also had to do with the fact that the bourgeoisie, in its everyday economic relations, played one working class against another. The problem of importing foreign labor to undermine the struggles of workers was a key issue in the development of the International itself. Thus, the 1866 *Instructions for Delegates of the Provisional General Council* of the International drafted by Marx established as one of its main objectives: "to counter the intrigues of capitalists always ready, in cases of strikes and lockouts, to misuse the foreign workman as a tool against the native workman." The working-class struggle could not be actively promoted, Marx insisted, if confined by national walls when faced with a capitalist system that expanded globally. Capital, he argued in *Capital*, vol. 1, chapter 31, takes its surplus—often "the capitalized blood of children"—abroad and uses this to invest in other countries, where it can repeat the same exploitative process once again, often in even more intolerable forms. Under these circumstances, workers are forced to join in

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international struggle.

Yet, for all of his calls for international solidarity, Marx also stressed that it could only be built on the basis of national, working-class organization rooted in the material conditions of exploitation in given national contexts, and aimed at the state apparatuses of various nations. "It is altogether self-evident," he wrote in *The Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875),

> that, to be able to fight at all, the working class must organize itself at home *as a class* and that its own country is the immediate arena of its struggle. So far its struggle is national, not in content, but, as *The Communist Manifesto* says, "in form." But the "framework of the present-day national state," e.g., the German empire, is itself in its turn economically "within the framework" of the world market, politically "within the framework" of the system of states. Every businessman knows that German trade is at the same time foreign trade, and the greatness of Herr Bismarck consists, to be sure, precisely in a kind of *international* policy.

If a working-class movement was to be organized, it therefore had to be initially national in form, aimed at its own national state and its own "immediate arena" of struggle. At the same time Marx insisted that these national struggles had to be organized—as were the bourgeoisie's own "free trade" efforts—into an international movement, representing the international activities of the working class. Criticizing the *Gotha Programme* (written by Ferdinand Lassale for the German Workers' Party), Marx complained that there was "not a word . . . *about the international functions* of the German working class!"

The international role of workers, Marx and Engels came to believe, also had to account for the struggles of peoples on the outskirts of the system. Capitalist relations penetrated these societies and generated forces of national resistance. For Engels, Chinese resistance at the time of the second Opium War, beginning in 1856, could be characterized as "a popular war for the maintenance of Chinese nationality, with all its overbearing prejudice, stupidity, learned ignorance and pedantic barbarism if you like, but yet a popular war." Engels emphasized Abd el-Kader's courage in leading the Algerian national resistance against the French.[8] The importance that Marx and Engels

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placed on socioeconomic development and their criticism of societies that they considered less civilized did not prevent them from appreciating the historical and cultural significance of national struggles of resistance. Revolts against racial oppression and colonialism, they clearly understood, were to grow in frequency and scale—and such revolts were integral to the world struggle, affecting the development of the working-class movement both nationally and internationally. "Labour in a white skin," Marx wrote in *Capital,* generalizing on the lessons of the U.S. Civil War, "cannot emancipate itself where it is branded in a black skin" (*Capital,* vol. 1, chapter 10, section 7).

For Marx, then, national and international organization by workers formed a kind of dialectic. Neglect of either part of this struggle would be fatal to the whole. He was highly critical of action based on an abstract "universal brotherhood of peoples" (as in the *Gotha Programme),* which essentially repudiated internationalism by failing to give it concrete form, or refrained from connecting it explicitly to national struggles. The working-class movement had to emerge initially out of immediate material conditions, and thus to have a local habitation, but it also had to take on the same global dimensions as capitalism itself.

Hence, Marx rejected what could be called a cosmopolitan political stance in the sense of jumping immediately to the cause of universal humanity within all nations and neglecting the necessity of struggle on national terrains. As Solomon Frank Bloom wrote in the concluding paragraphs to his classic work, *The World of Nations: A Study of the National Implications in the Work of Karl Marx* (1941):

> There are several kinds of internationalism. The character of Marx's internationalism was defined by his acceptance of the existence of many diverse societies and by his emphasis on the intensive organization of the individual society. He was decidedly not a cosmopolite in his picture of a world order although there were many traces of cosmopolitanism in his thought. Cosmopolitanism seeks to pass from the individual to mankind without the intermediate stopping place of social units less comprehensive than the whole species. . . . He was an internationalist, not only in the sense of advocating a system of cooperative world relations, but in the more specific sense of conceiving that system as the resultant or function of the

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> friendly interaction of large nations which were organized harmoniously within.
>
> Along with the too-small society, Marx rejected the vague and amorphous global society. He admitted considerable local variations, even within the same system of production. The socialist world of his imagination consisted of a limited number of advanced nations. His conception of world literature and world culture was a similar one. He reveled in linguistic variety and was at home with ancient and modern literature. He spoke of a world literature as already in the process of formation in the nineteenth century. It was the product of great nations which were developing distinctive, and yet related, literatures.

Socialist internationalism, as set out by Marx, was thus a form of egalitarian universalism that could only develop through national struggles and the creation of multinational societies in which none would have any special privilege. It could not take the form of a "vague and amorphous global society"—the goal of capitalism itself. This society, in the words of Aijaz Ahmad (*MR*, July-August 1995), has no desire for "civilizations of universal and multinational equality," but has as its aim only a widening orbit of exploitation. "To call cosmopolitan exploitation universal brotherhood," Marx declared in his 1848 speech on free trade "is an idea that could only be engendered in the brain of the bourgeoisie. All the destructive phenomena which unlimited competition gives rise to within one country are reproduced in more gigantic proportions on the world market."

A socialist internationalism that would counter this, Marx insisted, must start with the rejection of a system of capitalist globalization, in which the "metropolis of capital" (Marx's term for the role that Britain had assumed in the nineteenth-century international system) is located in the rich countries at the center of the system and is able to supplement its own wealth-creation process by drawing on the surplus generated by the vast majority of the world's populations living in the much poorer, largely agricultural periphery.[9] There can be no genuine internationalism that does not have anti-imperialism at its heart.

The Struggle Against Capitalist Globalization Today

In 1852, Marx wrote a letter to a friend in which he said that,

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"Both of us shall have had our heads chopped off or be shaky with age by the time it is possible to go from London to Calcutta in seven days. And Australia, and California, and the Pacific Ocean! The citizens of the new world will be unable to imagine how small our world was!" (quoted in Bloom, *The World of Nations*, p. 202). But, small as that world was, by focusing on capitalism's globalizing tendencies in the nineteenth century, Marx was able not only to draw out many of the conditions governing that process, but also to lay out the conditions that would have to govern a socialist internationalism that alone could combat it effectively. In today's world, at a more developed stage of capitalist globalization, these insights remain central.

In the more advanced imperialist order of the contemporary world, characterized by the concentration and centralization of capital on a world scale, the "bleeding process" and the "famine years" that Marx alluded to in his discussion of British rule in India have not disappeared, but exist in more heightened, more globalized forms than ever before. The terms of trade for non-oil primary commodity exports from underdeveloped countries, upon which most nations in the periphery still depend for their exports and foreign-exchange earnings, have been systematically depressed to the extent that cumulative losses to underdeveloped countries amounted to some 290 billion dollars between 1980 and 1991. The losses to these countries in this regard—sixty billion dollars in 1991 alone—exceeded all multilateral aid to underdeveloped countries that year. Based on economic indices constructed by World Bank economists going back to 1900, "the general level of real commodity prices had fallen by 1986 below the nadir reached in 1932 during the Great Depression of the interwar era."[10]

Such conditions help to explain the worsening poverty and increasing indebtedness of most third-world countries. "According to the Food and Agriculture Organization," the *Economist* recently reported (March 25, 2000), "830 million people in the world are underfed." At the same time, world cereal stocks remain far in excess of world consumption every year—an ironic manifestation of the inequities of an imperialist world system

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that makes hundreds of millions of people "hungry for profit."[11]

Today, we are often told that these circumstances, though unfortunate, are a result of an unfolding process of globalization, which has nothing to do with the international exploitation of one nation by another. Rather, it is simply a human tragedy arising from original underdevelopment coupled with overpopulation and lack of rational, Western institutions of government. Those states that try to treat it as an economic problem to be addressed through controls on the movement of capital are told that they are kicking a gift horse—capital—in the mouth. Moreover, all such attempts by states to intervene in the market are seen as ultimately useless and even self-defeating. An important part of the ideology of globalization is that nation-states are no longer significant in the organization of economic relations, that they have been bypassed by global forces. State intervention in the global market, it is presumed, makes things worse rather than better—an argument that ignores the fact that states frequently intervene on behalf of capital itself.

Yet if states, as Marx taught, exist "'within the framework' of the world market," they also exist, as he further insisted, "'within the framework' of a system of states." This system of states is necessary in order to construct and maintain the capitalist world market and hence *cannot* be dispensed with if the world market is to function smoothly. The converse, however, is not true. The system of states *can* dispense with the exploitative framework of the world market system, insofar as class struggles from below serve to transform these states themselves. At no time, then, is the struggle over the state irrelevant to the larger global political-economic reality of imperialism.

Capitalist globalization, Marx's analysis suggested, was not an historical endpoint but an ongoing process of development that would almost surely lead to its own undoing, producing its own antithesis in the form of working-class internationalism. In the short period of capitalist triumphalism, in the final decade of the twentieth century, such views would have been summarily dismissed as insignificant. Yet, that period of triumphalism has now largely passed. Halfway through the first year of the new millen-

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nium, it is clear that a specter is haunting capitalist globalization: the specter of a new internationalism.

NOTES

1. On the issue of the Asiatic mode of production, see Umberto Melotti, *Marx and the Third World* (London: Macmillan, 1972).
2. The switch in Marx's views on colonialism in the 1860s, toward an analysis that emphasized conditions of what later came to be called "the development of underdevelopment," has been heavily documented in previous analyses—though this is still often overlooked in the literature. See Horace B. Davis, *Nationalism and Socialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), pp. 59-73; Kenzo Mohri, "Marx and 'Underdevelopment,'" *Monthly Review*, vol. 30, no. 11 (April 1979), pp. 32-42, Suniti Kumar Ghosh, "Marx on India," *Monthly Review*, vol. 35, no. 8 (January 1984), pp. 39-53.
3. Karl Marx, *On the First International* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1973), p. 174.
4. T. Ellison, *The Cotton Trade of Great Britain* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968), p. 95.
5. Henry Adams, as the son of the U.S. ambassador, reported on the historic 1863 meeting in St. James' Hall in London, which Marx also attended. Adams came to a similar conclusion as Marx, arguing that the British workers had taken a stance "almost without precedence in their history." On this crucial struggle in working-class history, see Philip Foner, *British Labor and the American Civil War* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981).
6. See Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement: Years of the First International* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965); L.E. Mins, ed., *The Founding of the First International: A Documentary Record* (New York: International Publishers, 1937).
7. In praising the British workers for their heroic stance, Marx was in accord with the views of Lincoln himself, who had written to thank the workers of Manchester after they rallied in support of the Union cause in January 1863, immediately following the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation. As Lincoln stated in his letter of January 19, 1863: "I know and deeply deplore, the suffering which the workingmen at Manchester, and in all Europe, are called to endure in this crisis. It has been often and studiously represented that the attempt to overthrow this Government, which was built upon the foundation of human rights, and to substitute for it one which should rest exclusively on human slavery, was likely to obtain the favor of Europe. Through the action of our disloyal citizens, the workingmen of Europe have been subjected to severe trial, for the purpose of forcing their sanction to that attempt. Under these circumstances, I cannot but regard your decisive utterances upon the question as an instance of sublime Christian heroism, which has not been surpassed in any age or in any country. It is indeed an energetic and reinspiring assurance of the inherent power of truth, and of the ultimate and universal triumph of justice, humanity and freedom." Quoted in Foner, *British Labor and the American Civil War*, p. 43.
8. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *On Colonialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), pp. 124, 160; Melotti, *Marx and the Third World*, pp. 114-123; Davis, *Nationalism and Socialism*, pp. 63-65.
9. On Marx's treatment of Britain as the "metropolis of capital," see especially Marx, On the First International, p. 172; Capital, vol. 1, chapter 30, note 7.
10. Alfred Maizels, "Commodity Market Trends and Instabilities," UNCTAD Review (1994), pp. 53-56.
11. For a systematic analysis, see Fred Magdoff, John Bellamy Foster, and Frederick H. Buttel, eds., *Hungry for Profit: The Agribusiness Threat to Farmers, Food, and the Environment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000).

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The Language of Globalization

by Peter Marcuse

The language of globalization deserves some explicit attention. To begin with, the word *globalization* itself is a nonconcept in most uses: a simple catalogue of everything that seems different since, say, 1970, whether advances in information technology, widespread use of air freight, speculation in currencies, increased capital flows across borders, Disneyfication of culture, mass marketing, global warming, genetic engineering, multinational corporate power, new international division of labor, international mobility of labor, reduced power of nation-states, postmodernism, or post-Fordism. The issue is more than one of careless use of words: intellectually, such muddy use of the term fogs any effort to separate cause from effect, to analyze what is being done, by whom, to whom, for what, and with what effect. Politically, leaving the term vague and ghostly permits its conversion to something with a life of its own, making it a force, fetishizing it as something that has an existence independent of the will of human beings, inevitable and irresistible. This lack of clarity in usage afflicts other elements of the discussion of globalization as well, with both analytic and political consequences. Let me outline some problem areas, and suggest some important differentiations.

First, the concept of globalization itself: it hardly needs reiteration in these pages that globalization is not something new under

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the sun, but is a particular form of capitalism, an expansion of capitalist relationships both in breadth (geographically) and in depth (penetrating ever-increasing aspects of human life). But there are two distinct aspects to the development of capitalist relations since 1970 that are often lumped together under the rubric of globalization: developments in technology and developments in the concentration of power. Separating *advances in technology* from the *global concentration of economic power,* and seeing how their combination has changed *class relations,* is critical both for analysis and for political strategy.

The link between advances in technology and the concentration of economic power is not an inevitable one. Computerization, the speed of communications made possible by advances in information technology, the ability to expand the span of control from one center across continents, the increased speed and efficiency of transportation (both for people and for goods), facilitating the flexibilization of production, and the automation of routine tasks are all indeed essential for the substantial increase in the concentration of economic power we are witnessing. But these advances in technology could be used in quite different ways (although it may be that, if their intended use were different, they would in fact be quite different). Advances in technology could mean either that the same quantity of useful goods and services could be produced with less effort or that, with the same effort, more could be produced. Either way, everyone would be better off, either working less or having more. That is not the way things are going, not because technology could not go that way, but because it is directed and harnessed by the power-holders to increase and concentrate their power. It has been used to change the balance of power between classes. Attention needs to be focused on this, not on the technology itself.

The distinction between *technological globalization* and *the globalization of power* is critical—not only analytically but also politically. It raises the question, "What might the other possibilities be if the two were separated?" We should speak of the existing combination of technological globalization and the globalization of power as *really existing globalization*; that would highlight the

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possibilities of an *alternative globalization*. Opponents of the damaging consequences of really existing globalization, from left as well as from liberal perspectives, are divided on the appropriate response to it. The slogan from Seattle in regard to the World Trade Organization (WTO)—"fix it or nix it"—and the equivalent suggested in the Washington demonstrations in April as to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF)—"shrink it or sink it"—and the related questions about whether we want a seat at the table or a different table or no table at all show an ambivalence about goals. The issues are difficult indeed. But the realization that an alternative globalization can at least be conceived of should be an important part of the debate on goals; speaking of what we now have as really existing globalization may help to keep the broader possibilities open.

By the same token, frequent references to the diminished or vanished power of nation-states to control globalization need some conceptual and linguistic clarity. The *myth of the powerless state* is a concept that clouds intelligent analysis of what is actually going on. The importance of state action in enabling the capitalist system of the industrialized world to function is increased, not reduced, as that system spreads internationally. If states do not control the movement of capital or of goods, it is not because they cannot but because they will not—it is an *abdication of state power*, not a lack of that power. The very importance attached by international business interests to the WTO, tariff agreements, the government enforcement of contractual rights and the protection of intellectual property interests attest to the continuing if not growing importance of the national state.

Furthermore, a strong element of fetishization often creeps into the very use of the term "state," with a very distinct political bias. It might be called the *fallacy of the homogenous state* and it appears in such formulations as those that speak of "the competitive state" (or, in my own field, the constant call for the "competitiveness of cities") or of benefits or harms to the "states" of the North or of the South. States and cities are internally divided; what is good for one group, class, or other interest within a state or city may have very different consequences for others. Govern-

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ments indeed have a certain autonomy and, in this limited sense, one may speak of states or cities as actors with interests of their own, meaning their specific political leaders and bureaucracies—or, more broadly, the regime in power; but it is even more true that governments are responsive to multiple interests and that particular interests regularly dominate the actions of most. To speak of a "national interest" usually conceals some very particular interests; to speak of states as if they represented all those living within them obscures reality.

In that sense, to speak of "U.S." domination of international affairs—important in one sense—requires a clear distinction between those who, in turn, dominate U.S. policy and those who are excluded from its formation. The same is true of other countries, as was clear in some of the discussions in Seattle, in which individuals from countries of the South took positions strongly divergent from those of their governments. If this distinction between a state and its people is important in terms of the political and formal actions of the state, it is even more important in terms of economic representation. Those who represent states in international economic negotiations are not representing any homogeneous set of national economic interests; the homogeneity may be better considered a characteristic of the interests at the bargaining table, that is to say, clusters of businesses and financial interests perhaps diverging on a sectoral basis but similar in their class character. The key divisions are not among states, but among classes; the homogeneity is not within states, but within classes.

Other language in discussions of globalization, while emanating from its proponents, frequently slips into use by its critics and obscures what is actually happening. "Human capital," for instance, is a twisting of meanings: calling it "labor skills" puts it in its proper context. "Governance" is a euphemism for diminished government and should be recognized as such. "Investment" may mean an expansion of productive capacity, or it may be pure speculation. "Free" markets are hardly costless, as in free public education; the true term is "private markets," and they limit, rather than expand, most notions of human freedom. "Reform,"

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of course, means privatization in its media use. "Producer services," indiscriminately used, strips the term "producer" of its social meaning. Printing stock reports should not be called "producer services:" printers are workers who operate machines, not "service providers," and stockbrokers should not be called producers if the word is to retain any real content.

These issues are not merely issues of terminology. No clear consensus has yet emerged among the various groups attempting to confront the ills produced by really existing globalization. The most moderate goals simply call for participation and transparency; the stronger liberal view asks for restructuring of the system of global institutions and regulations; radical views include both calls for eliminating global institutions entirely or replacing them with a completely different system of relations, both economic and political, within nation-states and among them. Discussions after Seattle have not yet widely coalesced around specific programmatic demands at the national level, such as actions demanded of the U.S. Congress, the U.S. trade representative, its United Nations delegate, or its representatives on various international agencies and bodies. A number of groups and many individuals are wrestling with the difficult problems of formulating goals, platforms, and specific demands for action. Demands consistent with one view are not necessarily inconsistent with other views; both commonalities of goals and differences among them, and both strategy and tactics, need further thought and clarification. Fuzziness of language may facilitate coalition formation in the short run, but more solid and long-term alliances are based on full mutual understanding. Being careful about the difference between technological globalization and the globalization of power, keeping the concept of alternative globalization on the table, dispensing with the myth of the powerless state and avoiding the fallacy of the homogenous state, and watching the traps of the Orwellian language of globalization, may all help in coming to a common agreement as to both long-term goals and next steps.

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Turtles, Teamsters, and Capital's Designs

by William K. Tabb

There is no doubt that Seattle was a major up for the left. Massive and militant demonstrations stopped business as usual. Media attention was widespread and managed to convey the protesters' serious sense of purpose and their critique of capital's model of globalization. The unity demonstrated in the now-famous turtle-teamster lovefest symbolized the healing of a breach between the ecological and anti-imperialist concerns of young people and an end to the narrow business unionism and Cold-War collaboration of the Meany-Kirkland years in the labor movement. A new left is emerging on campuses and in the streets among young people and renewed trade-union militance is more visible. The outrage at the loss of democratic control to global-state economic institutions has prompted a vital and promising internationalism.

The events in Seattle confront progressives with two interconnected questions. First, what can we do to make the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the other institutions of global governance democratically accountable? Second, how can we strengthen internationalist consciousness and build working-class solidarity? At the most general level, there need be no conflict between the answers to these questions. However, it is important to understand that,

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while the WTO and the IMF are undemocratic tools of transnational capital, so too are the governments that appoint the leaders of these institutions. The real issue is the class nature of both the international institutions and the states represented in them. Care must be taken, too, to recognize the tremendous co-optive power of capital. For example, the United Nations (UN), which has become a sort of institutional home for the thinking of those opposed to transnational capital and in favor of more socially and ecologically balanced development, often acts as a safety valve for capital. That is, capital dominates the WTO and the IMF, and these organizations serve capital's designs, while capital confines its opponents to nonbinding resolutions and good intentions.

In Seattle, the critique of accumulation reached a new level of mass consciousness and breathed life into alternative visions. The "street heat" put muscle behind the challenge to labor exploitation, environmental degradation, and poverty. We may be seeing a shift of historical importance. Yet social change is a slow process and we need to assess the impact of Seattle and the increased social activism with both an optimism of the spirit and a more critical intellect. We should look first at the connection between the institutions of global governance and the leading sectors of capital and then at elite designs in this post-Seattle period, focusing briefly on this year's meeting of the World Global Forum in Davos, Switzerland; turn to the long-term perspective of globalist policy makers; note issues surrounding labor regulation and sustainable development; and end with a closer look at the significance of the WTO decision on sea turtles and the future of progressive struggle. The contours of class struggle are changing. Seattle and the response to it is a helpful lens through which to examine some important aspects of those changes.

Elite Policy-Making

While new forms of governance are being imposed by the WTO, the IMF, and other global-state economic institutions, these organizations hardly initiate the rules. Rather, before any

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of these organizations meet, the United States makes proposals which are discussed within the QUAD—a group composed of the United States, the European Union (EU), Japan, and Canada—which convenes separately and, in secrecy, makes key decisions without the participation of the other members of the world community. The QUAD is not recognized in any of their charters, but it acts as an executive committee that determines their direction. In Seattle, the vast majority of WTO members waited outside the exclusive Green Room meetings, as they were called, for the QUAD to reach decisions that would then be discussed by the body. It was clear to the other delegates that they were essentially excluded from real decision-making. Thanks to the tens of thousands of demonstrators in the streets outside, delegates were encouraged to say no to the QUAD's demands. It was the most assertive participation from the developing world at any such gathering.

Behind the officials representing the QUAD are the corporations they serve. Personnel move back and forth between lobbyists for and leadership of giant corporations, the biggest banks, and the leading legal firms, and what is called public service. Corporate groups such as the Business Roundtable in the United States, the European Roundtable of Industrialists in Europe, the Business Council on National Issues in Canada, and the Keidanren in Japan consult closely with the officials who go first to QUAD meetings and then to the general gatherings that the broad membership of the noncore states attend. Through this process, the desires of the dominant sectors of the capitalist class are first negotiated and then imposed on weaker capitals and the workers of the world.

While these institutions are all undemocratic and erode people's sovereign authority to govern themselves, in a real sense so are the governments that have created them. Greater democratic control is prevented at all levels by this corporate-government collusion and the power of money to buy politicians and exclude other voices from the councils where the deals are made. The structural roots of this collusion lie in the nature of a system that allows one class to dominate others, a political order in which

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corporations with sales larger than the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of most countries are considered individuals with the same legal rights as other "citizens," and in which formal equality masks the unequal power to command government.

It is therefore not only the unjust rules and practices of the IMF and the WTO that need to be addressed, but the class relationships that circumscribe government decision-making more broadly. The democratic deficit at the global level reflects these economic and political relations of dominance. The role of governments, courts, and police powers in defending property rights rather than people's needs may look different to many citizens of the core because we are not used to thinking in such structural terms or, indeed, to being treated this way. Citizens and workers in the QUAD have been, relatively speaking, the beneficiaries of the uneven development and imperialist relations inherent in the way the world system has operated. In an era of economic restructuring and globalization, however, a harsher face of capitalism has presented itself to the core. Without downplaying the enormous differences that still remain between workers in the core and those on the periphery, first-world workers have more and more in common with third-world workers. Hopefully, these changes in objective conditions will make it easier for the world's workers to unite.

Capital's powers are further increased by the sharp divisions of nationality, ethnicity, gender, and religion among workers, as well as by the fact that capital has allies among certain professional and technical workers. Capital also has considerable control over the media and the political establishment, which benefit from globalization. However, the workings of the market system now make capital vulnerable in new ways. For many corporations, the most important asset is their image. Nike's and Disney's profits, for example, flow from consumers' willingness to buy—and enthusiasm for—their branded products. As information about how they (mis)treat their workers and the environment is brought to light (through public campaigns, consumer boycotts, strike support, and court challenges), a critique of exploitation, consumerism, and a wider anticorporate con-

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sciousness grows. These campaigns demand accountability and democratic control over transnationals. They suggest that a different kind of multilateral agreement on investment, trade, and finance is possible.

On the Slopes

This winter in Davos, Switzerland, the closest thing the world has to an executive committee of the ruling class and its key agents met, as they do annually, at the World Economic Forum. It cost 22,500 dollars to come to the meeting—on top of the fifteen thousand dollar annual dues paid by the one thousand companies whose CEOs attend Forum events. (Of course, it's all tax deductible.) There was a different spirit in the air this year, as the world elite faced the unhappy prospect of demonstrators coming to their isolated retreat, disturbing their deliberations, and bringing with them Seattle-style "no justice, no peace" street heat. As a result, the Forum wanted "constructive dialogue." Not only was AFL-CIO chief John Sweeney invited to speak but the human rights group Amnesty International and the environmental-action organization Greenpeace were also welcomed. Of course, this (perhaps temporary) commitment to dialogue is newfound. The whole point of Davos is for the movers and shakers to get far away from everyone else to reach consensus. It was only the threat of worldwide rebellion to their domination that led them to stress unfamiliar words and concepts.

Having previously excluded the dissenters' concerns as irrelevant to the U.S. free-trade agenda, U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky now struck a very different note at the meeting, saying, "We cannot isolate economics as distinct from the environment and labor." Ambassador Barshefsky said this even though that was the very reason the QUAD had structured the rules of the WTO the way it had. After Seattle, she was ready to concede, "That's a distinction that's artificial." President Clinton referred to Mr. Sweeney by name three times in his own remarks, more than he mentioned anyone else, and said, "People who favor freer trade have no choice now but to open the door to these new voices. The more we deny this the more we fuel the

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fires of protectionism, not put them out." Whether flattery and more "feel your pain" rhetoric will be enough to blunt labor militancy remains to be seen.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan was a guest at the World Economic Forum as well. He was there to urge the corporate elite to "give a human face to the global market." He saw his task as urging social harmony and warning of the costs economic volatility could bring. He spoke of the need to compensate the victims. Otherwise all those "isms" of the age of globalization—protectionism, fanaticism, populism, ethnic chauvinism and terrorism—would overwhelm the smooth operation of an open world market. He offered a partnership between the UN and the corporations, making it clear that he understood who would be junior partner. "I made the point that the everyday work of the United Nations—whether in peacekeeping, setting technical standards, protecting intellectual property, or providing much-needed assistance to developing countries—helps to expand opportunities for business around the world." Without "your resources," he told the capitalists assembled in Davos, the objectives of the UN would "remain elusive."[1] One of the effects of U.S. refusal to pay its UN dues has been to encourage the UN to cast around for alternative sources of funds, including corporate sponsorship. Some of the NGOs not offered a seat at the table have suggested a compact between the UN and civil society with regard to the UN's relation with the private sector. They propose a legal framework to govern the behavior of multinational corporations (MNCs) to protect ecosystems, human health, labor standards, and human rights. The assistance the UN might offer corporations to improve their human rights and environmental behavior will not, they said pointedly, "be considered a 'partnership.'" Perhaps they envisioned health clinics in Myanmar with plaques thanking the UN and Socal and advertisements that celebrate the schools built for the Ogoni in Nigeria by Shell being featured during TV programs—thanks to a grant from the generous transnational attempting to rehabilitate its reputation. The NGOs urged that any money the UN accepted from corporate sponsors be used for programs that did not have a direct

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connection to the commercial projects of that company.[2]

The movement should make as much noise as it can clarifying the issues involved. Things are moving quite quickly; what seemed like radical demands only a few months ago have been embraced, at least rhetorically, by government policy-makers. The demand for debt forgiveness for the poorest, most heavily indebted countries and the regulation of offshore tax havens (where banking secrecy laws have permitted money-laundering by drug cartels and corrupt politicians and well-connected tax-evaders and other crooks) are part of mainstream reform proposals these days. The World Bank consults in a highly visible fashion with NGOs, which has significantly defused antagonisms towards that organization. There is widespread discussion of restructuring the IMF and reducing its role in running the economies of debtor nations.

The strength of the popular movements and the anger of many developing economies exhibited in Seattle has led to substantial public-relations efforts by the corporations and some fast footwork by politicians trying to spin a more sympathetic posture. Some movement "leaders" have offered to collaborate in exchange for a seat at the table. Will their participation as insiders make a positive difference for working people and the environment? Or will these efforts succeed only in disarming the movement and reducing the militance of the elements that are considered responsible negotiating partners? There is always a tension between inside and outside progressive strategies. Our own political clarity becomes increasingly important if this new wave of radical activism is to develop.

The Struggle for Labor's Rights

At Davos, Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo told the World Economic Forum that, "What most people fail to realize is that the low salaries and poor working conditions to which most workers are subject is their only alternative to extreme rural poverty." Workers are always told this: "You have two choices: take the wages we offer, or fend for yourself without access to our capital. You are free to choose." About the same time Zedillo was

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wowing them in Davos, John Stackhouse, writing in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* (December 2, 1999), was reporting from Mexico that many of the workers struggling to make ends meet in the maquiladoras "do not blame the World Trade Organization or even the free-trade agreement that had enriched the Mexican economy. They fault their own government for crushing union movements and letting companies skirt basic national and international laws." The workers seem to see that there is a third choice between accepting what the ruling class is willing to give them and quietly going off to starve, and that it is always one's own ruling class that must be dealt with first.

Workers in the third world worry when the leading capitalist states are suddenly interested in labor rights and environmental standards in their countries. It is not that the trade unions and popular movements do not want improved conditions. Rather, they see the apparent discovery of universal human values and standards by Western governments as a ploy to advance the interests of their own corporations. As Sanjay Mangala Gopal, the co-coordinator of the National Alliance of People's Movements in India says, "We will define our own way of development and we are capable of doing it. Who are you to teach us about child labor or anything else?"[3]

Gopal is right to be outraged. The now-righteous United States has not signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, or the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. It also explicitly exempts international workers from the Fair Labor Standards Act, excusing itself and its transnationals from accountability for labor-rights violations of workers abroad. Of the more than 180 International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions, the United States has ratified only twelve. (For more on ILO conventions, see Martin Hart-Landsberg's piece in this issue.) Yet the United States tells poor nations that they must submit to rules imposed by international governance institutions over which they have little control. For the progressive movement, the points raised by Gopal are complicated. For example, the ILO core labor standards are protection of the right of free

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association; protection of the right to organize and bargain collectively; the abolition of forced labor and child labor; the equal remuneration for men and women for equal work; and the establishment of a policy of nondiscrimination. Of course, these standards should be adopted worldwide and enforced by national courts. But their adoption, which will be applauded by liberals as some sort of ultimate victory, must not serve to disorient the left. Their adoption will not mean much in practice unless there are strong social movements in place locally to enforce them every day at the point of production and constant international pressure on transnational corporations by solidarity movements. To believe that the WTO and the IMF, which could, in theory, enforce labor standards, will do so is wishful thinking, as is the belief that the national governments of the advanced capitalist nations will use their considerable powers to insure that corporations to obey such standards in every country.

The issue of child labor is an example of the complexities faced by progressives. About 70 percent of the 250 million children between the ages of five and fourteen who work are unpaid family workers, and mostly live in rural areas. Only 5 percent are estimated to be employed in export-related production (though there they sometimes represent a substantial proportion of labor employed). Land reform and other family assistance could do much to ease child labor by reducing the poverty that makes education an unlikely alternative. Similarly, job creation for adults at livable wages in the cities would be the best "family values" policy, in rich countries as well as poor ones.

If child labor is not a make-or-break issue for transnational corporations, since it involves a relatively small part of their overall employment (where adult labor is so cheap why employ children?), it is nevertheless possible to define child labor in ways that will raise consciousness and garner strong support in third-world countries. Child-labor practices include trafficking in children, forced or compulsory labor (including debt bondage and serfdom), the use or offering of children for prostitution or pornographic performances, and the employment of children in the drug trade and other illegal activities. These practices

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jeopardize children's health and safety and are opposed by local labor-advocacy groups and trade unions. Our support for these groups would make a difference. This is a job for solidarity movements and not for Western governments, which are driven by the interests of their corporations and care about labor standards only when pushed by politically strong, progressive movements or when that interest serves their own ends. They are the wrong instrument to control and enforce progressive labor standards in other countries. Indeed, the governments, and especially the United States government, have been busy undermining health, safety, and environmental protections at home. Even where independent, outside monitors exist, there are problems. These monitors are often private, for-profit companies that exploit their own employees, the actual factory inspectors. Their profitability might depend on them giving abusive corporations clean bills of health.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that concern in the West for widespread labor abuse is primarily the result of fear of competition. Exploitation "there" erodes living standards and intensifies work for workers "here." This issue will only become more important. The global workforce doubled in size between 1965 and 1995. As David Coates writes: "Globalization in its modern form is a process based less on the proliferation of computers than on the proliferation of proletarians. The growth in the size of the world's proletariat and the change in its geographical centers of gravity—and not simply the enhanced mobility of capital—are among the defining features of the current phase of global capitalism."[4]

The Strategy of Transnational Corporate Liberalism

U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Lawrence Summers spoke this past February to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. After explaining how the international financial institutions (IFIs) promote vital humanitarian objectives, he got down to his more central argument that these IFIs promote liberalized markets, strengthen the rights of property, and provide the right environment for private investment. He underlined the national

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and class interests involved: "The United States has 4.5 percent of the world's population, 22 percent of its income. In a very real sense, the future growth in our standard of living will depend a great deal on the growth of our export markets. And that, in turn, will depend a great deal on whether the kinds of development strategies that the IFIs support are successful." As opposed to the true believers in the free market, represented by the International Financial Institution Financial Advisory Commission (established by the Congressional Republican leadership under the monetarist Allan Meltzer and intent on trimming the wings of the IFIs and leaving things to the market), Summers represents the perspective of the corporatist internationalists, who want to continue to use the IFIs to force dependent economies to restructure in ways that are conducive to U.S. capital's interests. As Summers explains, every dollar the United States contributes to the multilateral development banks leverages to more than forty-five dollars in official lending to countries where three-quarters of the world's population lives. Given U.S. influence over the conditions these institutions put on lending, this would seem a bargain. He offers the example of Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous economy, which in its most recent Letter of Intent (published January 20, 2000) pledged to "maintain a liberal trade regime, avoid introducing any new trade barriers, remove remaining distortionary elements in the trade structure, eliminate during the program period all exemptions to import tariffs, and remove all existing nontariff barriers." A weakened, debt-ridden Indonesia was forced to give international capital what it wanted, an economy foreign capital could enter on its own terms without government restrictions.

Secretary Summers explained to the committee the corporate internationalists' long-term thinking on the labor supply and market needs of the transnationals. "Mr. Chairman," he said, "debt relief for the poorest countries is a global moral imperative. It is also a global economic imperative, at a time when nearly all of the growth in the world's labor force and productivity will be in the developing countries—and their success in a new global economy is going to be important to the success of us all." These

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countries are the location of the global factory and markets of the twenty-first century.

What Summers' remarks signify is a refocusing of elite tactics—both a response to critics and the strength of the progressive movements on the one hand and a sure understanding of the long-term interests of capital on the other. Now that the Cold War has waned, capital no longer needs to accept the rent-seeking of local elites and military rulers who rip off foreign capital even as they exploit their own people in ways that limit the long-term growth prospects of their economies. During the Cold War they were necessary, but in an era of globalization, they typically are not. Indeed, their domination can be counterproductive.

None of this means that police-state tactics will not continue to be used as needed or that military interventions are a thing of the past. However, in recognition of new realities, there has been a shift to a kinder, gentler model, as exemplified by the IMF in 1999. It replaced its Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility with the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility and required countries seeking debt relief and new concessional loans to not only establish a solid track record of reform but also produce a "forward-looking Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper." The World Bank has said that it will do its part in assisting these countries to define national poverty reduction goals, such as reducing infant mortality and malnutrition. One would feel better about U.S. efforts to push the IFIs in this direction if our country adopted such priorities at home. The suspicion has to be that these are new controls with which to manipulate dependent economies. But just as national elites in the United States in the 1960s accepted the need to modernize race relations in the U.S. South, so too have they now seen the need to promote governance in poor nations by a Western-trained technocratic elite oriented toward market efficiency (combined with some showcase poverty programs) to defuse radical demands.

There are positive aspects of these actions. The local ruling classes, which have oppressed national workers in places like Indonesia and Nigeria, are on the defensive as the global-state governance institutions force a respect for the rule of law and

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allow competition from lower-cost producers. This is the modernization process Marx applauded. But if workers are to benefit from this universalizing of the market, they must organize all the workers of the world in class-conscious movements to claim what is their right. Otherwise the social disorganization and harsh realities of single-minded market-driven development will continue to put off meeting human needs in favor of a longrun to which many will have been sacrificed and that will exist only as an ever-receding mirage for most working people.

Labor and Environmental Issues

This brings us to the leaders and members of the Teamsters Union who have become active in anti-WTO activities. They have done so in significant measure because, under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Mexican truck drivers are allowed to carry cargo to final destinations inside the United States. Thanks to President Clinton's newfound interest in highway safety and his serendipitous discovery that Mexican inspections are not adequate to insure it, he has banned Mexican trucks from coming across the border—at least until after the November election. At that point, Teamster president Jimmy Hoffa, Jr. and his "take back the power" campaign will have begun to wear thin. Hopefully, trade unionists and their allies will come to see that only the organization of those who drive and compete with the current union members will work as a strategy to protect union benefits.

Similarly, labor's campaign to keep China out of the WTO will not change what happens inside China nearly as much as the Chinese working class organizing independent trade unions will. It is clear that the Chinese ruling elite, which includes the privileged children of top party officials, are capitalist roaders who attract foreign capital by suppressing free-trade unionism and denying other political freedoms. I do not think that it is xenophobic to point this out, nor should we deny the impact of China's policies and those of other repressive Asian regimes on workers elsewhere. Because of the Republican right wing's (and some sectors of U.S. capital's) support for the campaign to

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demonize China and the "yellow peril," many on the left have argued that it is wrong to support efforts to keep China out of the WTO and to pressure China to improve its human rights practices. The United States, they argue, has supported worse states and never made such a campaign against them.

What is certain is that China's admittance or nonadmittance to the WTO is largely beside the point, from the perspective of working-class struggle. Blocking China's membership in the WTO—if that were possible—would do little to help workers inside or outside China. Nor would admitting China to WTO membership help its workers. The *China Labour Bulletin* (November-December 1999)—a Hong Kong bimonthly founded by Han Dong-fang, the Chinese electrician jailed without trial for twenty-two months for antigovernment and pro-working-class activity—points out that wage arrears, unemployment, and poverty "are the norm, not the exception" in China. It declares that, "It is [the] experience of 20 years of reform that does not give much cause for optimism about China's WTO entry. The proposal to set up a WTO working group on the effects of globalization on labor standards is also unlikely to have the Chinese government rushing to ratify and implement the UN conventions it has already signed that are supposed to guarantee freedom of association and other human rights. It is hard to see how membership will improve our situation." WTO membership for China would help foreign capital in China, allowing it to exert additional pressure on the government to protect its interests at the expense of Chinese workers, while promoting a kind of comprador elite in China—insofar as Chinese elites would increasingly be converted into junior partners in the more systematic international exploitation of their own workers. This is why corporate America is pressing for closer ties to China.

The WTO Turtle/Shrimp Decisions

International labor conditions/coalitions obviously were not the only issues in Seattle. Protestors in colorful turtle outfits also called attention to the role of the WTO in dismantling environmental protections. Sea turtles are one of nature's wonders. They

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can live up to eighty years and the largest can weigh 1400 pounds. Currently 125,000 of them are killed each year—hauled up as unwanted bycatch by shrimpers and other fishermen. At least four of the existing species face extinction. In response to this threat, a grid trapdoor was developed. Installed inside trawling nets, it allows shrimp to pass to the back of the net while directing sea turtles and other large unintentionally caught objects out of the net. Under the authority of the Endangered Species Act, the Department of Commerce promulgated regulations requiring U.S. shrimp trawlers to use these devices. Congress placed a limitation on the importation of shrimp from nations which have not taken adequate measures to protect sea turtles. India, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Thailand complained first to the General Agreement on Tarriffs and Trade (GATT) and then to its successor, the WTO, on the grounds that the United States was forcing its environmental ideals on others and violating the rules of the free-trade regime. The WTO panel agreed.

The WTO requirement that "like goods be treated as equal" means that since shrimp harvested using turtle-excluding devices cannot be distinguished from shrimp caught in traditional mechanical nets, there can be no discriminating against the latter in favor of the former. This reification of commodities (in which the social relations of exploitation and extraction of "natural resources" become invisible) appears in other decisions as well. Soccer balls sewn by children look like those made under safe and fair conditions by adult employees—making the exploitation of children invisible at the level of market exchange. The rule's purpose is to turn what are social relations into an exchange of things from which all traces of moral specificity can be hidden as a matter of international treaty—reinforcing the reification of commodities with reification as legal principle. Many, perhaps most, of us—in our role as consumers—reject such logic. That is why corporations need the WTO to overrule our ability to constrain their behavior.

The case is complicated but—although the panel report contains hundreds of pages of closely printed text, appendices, and annexes—its conclusion is simple: market values trump all else.

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The purpose of the agreement is free trade and nothing can stand in the way of this overriding goal. The United States claimed support for its actions in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which require governments to ensure that living resources are not endangered by overexploitation, and from the WTO agreement itself, which seems to allow exceptions from unfettered trade in such instances as well. The panel rejected the U.S. case, saying that under GATT and the WTO, "the central focus of the agreement remains the promotion of economic development through trade." NGOs wishing to file amicus briefs were told by the panel they had no right to participate, that this was "incompatible with the provisions of the DSU [Dispute Settlement Understanding] as currently applied." The United States also lost on appeal to the Appellate Body, although the rulings there reflected the impact of the environmental movement's angry and effective response to the WTO. It is an important decision because the Body rejected the logic of the panel and, in theory, opened the door to more progressive interpretation of the rules. The Appellate Body said that environmental measures could potentially be compatible with WTO rules. However, while the ruling opened the way for a country to take strong measures to protect shared global resources like sea turtles, it established such stringent conditions that it could declare that U.S. law did not meet them. Debates in the law journals continue over the significance of the ruling. My own view is that popular pressure will decide the issue. The WTO surely wants to follow the corporation's preferences. It is the task of the movement to insure that they cannot get away with this.

Elites understand that they rule not only through the capacities they have to use force on recalcitrants, but through ideological hegemony, the acceptance that there is no alternative. They say that even if their system is not perfect, it is the best that is possible. The new movement is successfully conveying that this is an unjust, harmful system that needs to be stopped; that it is only the opposition of a counter-hegemonic set of ideas about how society can and should be managed, and self-organization by

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popular movements, that can save the planet from the devastating policies of a system based on greed and protect and enhance the lives and working conditions of the vast majority of those now sacrificed to this greed. It is not possible to tell what the outcome will be as such critiques deepen and understanding and activism spread. Seattle will undoubtedly be remembered as a turning point in a global struggle.

The IMF and the World Bank

This past April, demonstrations in Washington, DC, at the annual joint meeting of the IMF and the World Bank called attention to the way these international agencies have contributed to economic crisis and to the ways that their imposition of austere solutions on the nations in crisis have exacerbated human misery. The World Bank has identified over one hundred major episodes of bank insolvency in ninety developing countries and transitional economies (former socialist nations) from the late 1970s to 1994. There have been more since 1994—in Mexico, in East Asia, and in Russia, to name only the most spectacular. In more than two-thirds of the countries for which data are available, the direct economic loss suffered was more than 3 percent of GDP, about the total increase in an average country's output in a good year. In the early 1980s, Argentina lost the equivalent of more than half of its GDP and Chile more than 40 percent. One might think that such costs would call into question the financial liberalization demanded as part of the Washington Consensus and the cause of much of the problem, but such notions have only begun to penetrate these institutions, and only after intense protest and criticism.

Financial liberalization and crisis have been good for transnational capital, making it easier for financial imperialism to penetrate and control developing economies. The austerity required to pay for the damages is absorbed by local populations, which suffer unemployment, lost government services, and higher prices resulting from forced currency devaluations. The IMF plays the "bad cop," making its performance criteria high growth and low inflation, while ignoring the accompanying increases in

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unemployment and poverty. It declares a nation like South Korea a success when output rebounds, even though unemployment remains at triple the precrisis level. The World Bank plays the "good cop," feeling the pain of the poor and extending some finances to address a bit of of the suffering unleashed by neoliberal policies. It offers a spoonful of sugar to help the bitter medicine go down. The struggle for economic justice in the twenty-first century will be international. As the drive by transnational corporations and transnational finance to impose their rule over the working people of the world comes to be seen for what it is, some old ways of thinking will come back into vogue. Perhaps it is not unreasonable to expect that sooner or later, some new bumper stickers will boldly say, "Workers of the World, Unite."

NOTES

1. Kofi Annan, "A Compact for the New Century," address to World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, January 31, 2000.
2. "Citizens' Compact on the United Nations and Corporations," January 28, 2000 (tracadmin@corpwatch.org).
3. Gopal is quoted in a very useful discussion of the issues by Jaggi Singh, an Indian journalist, in an essay posted on the Web.
4. David Coates, *Models of Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 256.

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"Workers of All Countries, Unite:" Will This Include the U.S. Labor Movement?

by Michael Yates

1

Capitalism is a system of production and distribution driven by the ceaseless efforts by capitalists to accumulate capital, that is, to maximize both profits and the growth of capital. Accumulation, in turn, is made possible by the exploitation of wage laborers, persons without any direct access to society's productive property. Workers are forced to sell their ability to work but when they do, they are owed nothing by their employers except a wage. That is, the employers have no social obligation to the workers; their relationship to them is impersonal in the extreme. It follows that, in the abstract, employers do not care anything about the workers' "characteristics." To them, black workers are interchangeable with whites, men with women, one nation's workers with those of any other. Employers are, in a word, equal-opportunity exploiters. They will replace one worker with another, move their capital to take advantage of cheaper labor (whatever its characteristics), and pit one group of employees against another, whenever such actions will, in their view, make it easier for them to accumulate capital.

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Isolated and disorganized at first, workers eventually figure out what is happening to them. Herded together in factories and deskilled by the detailed division of labor and mechanization, they come to see that they must collectively organize to oppose their exploitation. If capital considers them to be one exploitable mass, that is how they must conceive of themselves. "In unity there is strength." "An injury to one is an injury to all." "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common." And, of course, "Workers of all countries, unite." As workers come to see themselves as an undifferentiated mass, they take action, forming unions that strike, picket, and boycott, and constituting political parties that vie for state power. Marxists believe that this propertyless mass of men and women, of all shades of color, and of every nation, is nothing less than the historic agent of the overthrow of capitalism and the beginning of communism.

2

At the high level of abstraction implied in the words above, all is clear. There are capitalists and there are workers; their interests are diametrically opposed; and workers will unify themselves to end their exploitation. Unfortunately, when we make our analysis less abstract, when we confront the world in all of its complex and historical concreteness, matters are not so clear. Two important problems confront the unity of the world's workers.[1] First, capitalism has always developed in the context of a nation, with an active and complicit state. Second, capitalism has, from its beginning, developed unevenly in different parts of the world. The original capitalist nations of Europe and, later, those special cases of the United States and Japan subjugated the rest of the world through their military and economic might, creating an imperialist system of rich and poor capitalist nations. These twin developments, nationalism and imperialism, have erected substantial barriers against the unity of the workers of the world.

If capital is bound geographically within a nation, it is certainly possible that organized workers will be able through their own actions to compel their employers to pay them more money, offer better benefits, reduce their hours, and better their working

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conditions. They will not need solidarity from workers in other nations to achieve these things. They may also be able to contest for state power on their own, so to speak. English craftsmen could and did organize effectively within England, and they did not require the help of French or German workers. The same is true for workers in the United States. Automobile workers organized the great sitdown strikes that brought General Motors to heel and, while they needed their wives, other workers, and some sympathy from the governor and the courts, they did not need an alliance with Mexican or Canadian workers to establish their union and win their first collective-bargaining agreements.

Not needing the support of workers in other nations does not, of course, mean that such support might not be useful or that it should not be requested. Perhaps the position of English craftsmen and U.S. automobile workers would have been even stronger—if not in the short run, then certainly in the long run—had they aligned themselves with the workers of other nations. So, why hasn't international solidarity been labor's rallying cry from the beginning? Two reasons suggest themselves. First, the power of nationalism as an ideology of exclusiveness quickly became very powerful. The establishment of official languages, the institution of a universal propaganda mechanism in the public schools, and the drafting of working people into national armies all had the effect of encouraging workers to be loyal to the nation. The converse of this loyalty has been distrust or even hatred of those who are "foreign." My father was a union-factory laborer for forty-four years, but his life experiences were not conducive to international solidarity. The Second World War, especially, shaped him into an almost fanatical supporter of the U.S. government (and de facto supporter of U.S. capital in most respects) and into an outright xenophobe when it came to the Japanese or the Soviets or the Chinese.

Second, nationalism in the advanced capitalist nations was intimately connected to imperialism. The vicious exploitation of workers and peasants in Africa, Asia, and Latin America went hand-in-hand with the promotion of a racist ideology that taught that these peoples either deserved what they were getting or were

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lucky to be associated with the rich nations. Furthermore, the surplus value pumped out of the peripheral nations gave the large multinational corporations money which, under enough trade-union pressure, they could be convinced to share with workers. This went along with successful efforts by the corporations and the government to co-opt labor leaders, through the formation of various kinds of labor-management organizations and assignment to public boards and commissions. The goal here was to convince labor's leaders, as well as union members, that imperialism was good for workers in the core capitalist nations. All of these efforts were, for the most part, successful. Labor organizations in all of the advanced capitalist countries have not only supported their own multinationals in the brutal exploitation of the economies and workers of the poor nations, they have even supported wars in which the workers of one rich nation fought against those of another.

3

Nowhere was the labor movement more nationalistic and anchored in imperialism than in the United States.[2] While there have been individual workers, unions, and movements devoted to the concept and practice of international solidarity, these have always been a minority and suffered decisive defeats at the hands of their more numerous opponents. The historical record is both appalling and tragic. At every critical juncture, labor stood against internationalism. Samuel Gompers demonized Chinese workers in language befitting a Klansman, and even the egalitarian Knights of Labor barred Chinese workers from membership. (It should be noted that this hatred of the Chinese was rooted in the fact that the United States was founded with the stain of racism on its soul, a racism which made antagonism to workers in the rest of the world an easy pill to swallow.) The American Federation of Labor (AFL) gave its full support to the country's entry into the First World War and helped government agents harass labor leftists opposed to the war. The AFL championed U.S. interventions in Latin America. The AFL and then the CIO refused to participate in international labor organizations that included left-led unions. Internationalists were routinely red-

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baited out of the labor movement (and out of their jobs), and at the beginning of the Cold War, almost all of the left-led unions were expelled from the AFL-CIO—allegedly for being dominated by communists but really for refusing to toe the imperialistic line. The AFL-CIO and some of the member unions were in league with the CIA and the State Department and wreaked havoc on progressive unions everywhere else in the world. The AFL-CIO eagerly supported the wars in Vietnam and Central America. It went on record in favor of employer sanctions against illegal immigrants.[3]

Those forces in the labor movement that favored international solidarity were dealt a deathblow during the Cold War. Before that time, there were always a fair number of radicals to counter the majority, but afterwards the Meanys, Lovestones, and Shankers were unopposed. Fanatical support for U.S. foreign policy and the championing of the corporate agenda implied by it were part of the so-called capital-labor "accord" of the postwar era. Corporations would continue to pay the largely white, male workers (who comprised the bulk of union membership) higher wages and benefits and the government would not encourage corporate warfare against unions or make war itself. In return, labor leaders would sing the praises of the "American Way" and refrain from any embarrassing criticisms of what the bosses and the state were doing to workers abroad (or, for that matter, to unorganized workers here, especially those neither white nor male).

Things went well for union leaders and many members until the long postwar boom ended in the early 1970s. Then all hell broke loose, as corporations once thought to be committed to the "accord" ripped it apart and went on the warpath against organized labor. The specifics of this attack and its devastating effect upon unions have been spelled out in *Monthly Review* before, but in the context of this essay, one aspect of it stands out.[4] Capital shed any loyalty it had to a nationalist and Keynesian agenda and embraced neoliberalism. It fought for and won trade agreements that make it much easier for it to traverse national borders, and it made "free" trade the litmus test for its political support. Soon both Democrats and Republicans were onboard.

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To its former "accord" allies, it said, in effect, "We no longer need you. You are too weak to matter. You could not stop us if you wanted to. (And chuckling to themselves, they said, 'You probably won't even try.') From now on the fruits of imperialism shall be ours alone."

4

Capital and its labor partners did not anticipate that the free fall in the living standards of U.S. workers that occurred throughout the 1970s and 1980s and the failure of most unions to do much about it would generate reform movements and resurgent activism. Often spearheaded by progressives from the great social movements of the 1960s and sometimes supported by remnants from the old left, this activism took a variety of forms, including attempts to make the unions more democratic and opposition to U.S. foreign policy in Central America. Out of all of this came the ferment that led to the ousting of the old guard in the AFL-CIO by the "New Voices" team.

As other authors in this issue have noted, the new AFL-CIO leadership quickly dismantled the notorious International Affairs Division and began to make noise and take actions indicating a new commitment to international solidarity. In fact, even during the decade before the historic 1995 AFL-CIO convention, a number of unions had begun to realize the necessity of building bridges with workers around the world.[5] The United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers (UE) made an alliance with an independent Mexican labor organization, the Authentic Labor Front (FAT). The UE helped finance FAT organizing campaigns in companies that also had plants employing UE workers in the United States. The FAT sent a fired Mexican organizer to Milwaukee to help the UE organize a plant there. The two groups jointly sponsored meetings among union representatives from both countries. The United Steel Workers brought the Ravenswood Aluminum Company in West Virginia to justice largely through an international solidarity campaign, which allied this prototypically nationalist union with workers in the Netherlands, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia (before partition), Rumania, England, and Venezuela.

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The old-guard Communication Workers of America (CWA) has worked with Canadian, European, and Mexican workers against the multinational communications giants that are gobbling up most of the world's telecommunications companies, including many that were formerly publicly owned. As I stated in a recent book review, "The CWA has promoted corporate 'codes of conduct' (union members will oppose a corporation's entry into a national market if it refuses to obey these), international strike support, information exchanges, political lobbying in support of workers in other countries, international conferences, legal complaints (under NAFTA, for example), product boycotts, newsletters, and cross-training of organizers to fight against such global behemoths as NYNEX, Northern Telecom, and Bell Atlantic."[6]

The New Voices leadership has supported such actions and has taken some of its own, including mending fences with organizations once considered too radical. AFL-CIO President Sweeney has sent emissaries to South Africa to meet with unions his predecessors would have denounced as communist and has himself met with independent Mexican labor leaders. As David Bacon mentions elsewhere in this issue, the AFL-CIO has abandoned its Cold-War operations in post-Soviet Russia. The AFL-CIO and member unions have lent a helping hand to students who are politicizing college campuses around the nation with their antisweatshop and anti-child-labor campaigns.

This new AFL-CIO was there for all to see in all of its glory during the heady days in Seattle last fall. Union leaders and members marched, rallied, made impassioned speeches, and even confronted the police in a remarkable demonstration of unity. U.S. unionists mingled with those from many nations, both rich and poor. Pledges of solidarity were made. At one rally, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees' president Gerald McEntee urged the crowd to "name the system." A South African brother invoked the name of Marx and was not only not shouted down but cheered. Teamsters mixed with environmentalists clad in turtle outfits. The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) shut down the docks

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on the entire West Coast. (The ILWU is almost unique among U.S. unions in its commitment to international solidarity. Through boycotts and strikes, it has consistently allied itself with workers around the world).

There is no doubt that the WTO protests energized working people. Post-Seattle meetings and workshops have been packed with enthusiastic opponents of global corporations. A local labor leader in Atlanta told me that he was convinced that the large demonstrations against the flying of the confederate flag in South Carolina owed their size and fervor to the WTO protests. This past April, large demonstrations were conducted by a wide variety of organizations against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which were having an annual meeting in Washington, DC. The AFL-CIO supported the Jubilee 2000 campaign to forgive third-world debt. All told, the past few months have given even the most pessimistic among us reason to hope.

5

Against this background of radical possibilities, it is necessary to be clearheaded. There are other signs which are not so heartening. Others in this issue have remarked on the fact that the AFL-CIO is still taking money from the U.S. State Department to finance some of its international operations. They have also expressed concern over Sweeney's endorsement of the U.S. platform at Seattle (in return for Clinton's promise to raise labor issues at the summit and his call for a labor subcommittee), as well as his presence and weak comments at Davos. In a lesser-known event, the AFL-CIO seemed not to have broken completely with its Cold-War past. When striking Mexican railroad workers reached out to U.S. workers recently, they were met with much enthusiasm. Several U.S. unions organized a group of delegates to go to Mexico City and then to the site of the strike in Northern Mexico. In Mexico City, they were met by the former director of the notorious American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), Jack Otero—accused by Philip Agee of being a CIA agent. Presumably dumped by Sweeney, Otero propagandized against the strikers, calling them communists; his agitation effectively paralyzed the delegation. At no time did the

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AFL-CIO leadership denounce Otero, and in fact worried that the delegates and their U.S. supporters would embarrass the official Mexican Railway Workers union—which, as we know, is a tool of the corporation-dominated Mexican government.[7]

The AFL-CIO's early endorsement of Al Gore for President speaks for itself. Some of the industrial unions protested this, but these unions cannot be said to have been pioneers of international solidarity. The United Auto Workers (UAW) refused to endorse Gore but, with the exception of a few honorable locals and leaders, this union has long sung a nationalist line. I once taught UAW workers at a plant near Pittsburgh. During a week of classes, they got heavy doses of chauvinist reasoning and dislike of Japanese and Mexicans was often palpable. Their union leaders had done little to educate them beyond "Buy American." George Becker, president of the Steel Workers and architect of the Ravenswood campaign, is now going all-out to build support for keeping China out of the WTO. According to a colleague of mine, at a WTO symposium at a local college, a steel union representative all but warned the audience of the "yellow hordes." I was at a meeting recently to propose, among other things, that local unions include short, twenty-minute "educationals" in local union meetings. The WTO was suggested as a topic, but the focus was on the importance of keeping China out of the WTO. Progressive unionists agreed when I suggested that we should be careful not to encourage union members to think of the WTO protests in a potentially chauvinistic way, especially considering the U.S. labor movement's long history of racism toward the Chinese. They also concurred when I said that there were plenty of sweatshops and prison-made goods right here in the United States, and we should engage workers on these issues, especially since we might be better able to do more about abuse here than in China. However, I was told that we had to meet the unions "where they were at." That meeting was a dose of reality for me.

6

Many progressives and leftists, in their desire to see improvements in the lives of working people, have too frequently ignored

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reality and jumped on the New Voices' bandwagon, leaving their critical faculties behind. They ignore the obvious. U.S. labor leaders, with very rare exceptions, are not radicals and never will be. The twin ideologies of nationalism and imperialism cast long shadows over them, and the failure to understand this poses a number of dangers.

First, there is always the possibility that labor's leaders will revert to old ways. If the right-wing forces within organized labor become stronger, there is a good chance that progressive leaders will also move to the right. In the process, they may look for scapegoats on the left and those leftists in important positions now will face expulsion. This is what happened during the Cold War. Progressives like Walter Reuther purged the left-led unions from the CIO and then led raids on them, continuing a move to the right that culminated in merger with the corrupt and reactionary unions of the AFL. That this happened to a strong left does not bode well for the much weaker left of today's labor movement. It would be very surprising indeed if, in the face of a resurgent right, Sweeney and company moved to the left. There is no precedent for this in U.S. labor history. Or suppose that a powerful labor movement in a poor nation moved decisively to the left and posed a threat to U.S.-based corporations and to the stability of a government friendly to the United States. If the United States offered support for the beleaguered government, would the AFL-CIO show solidarity with that country's left-wing labor movement? Or would it line up solidly behind the stars and stripes? History tells us that the latter is the more likely course of action. Left-wing labor leaders languished in Indonesian jails for years, yet even today you don't see much in the way of AFL-CIO support for them, much less condemnation of the U.S. government for its decades of support for the mass murderers who ruled the country.

Second, AFL-CIO endorsement of the U.S. corporate and Clinton administration position on the WTO, president Sweeney's visits to Davos, and comments made by Tony Blair and ICFTU president Bill Jordan, combined with conciliatory comments from the IMF, the United Nations (UN), and Bill Clinton suggest that we are witnessing the co-optation of liberal and

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progressive opponents of neoliberalism. Everyone agrees, these folks say, that global trade is a good thing; it increases the world's output so significantly. All that is needed are some reforms—that is, the elimination of the worst abuses of workers, peasants, and the environment and some redistribution of this rising production to the world's poor. Then global capitalism can continue indefinitely and benefit everyone. Sweeney, Jordan, Clinton, Blair, Kofi Annan, and the officers of the IMF are issuing stern warnings that unless global capital changes its ways and allows for some regulation, the "irrational" opponents of trade will win support from the public, to the ultimate detriment of all. The goal should be a global capitalism "with a human face."

Of course, it is the "irrationalists" who are correct; the bad results of trade are inherent in the system itself. By conceding what needs to be contested, namely the private ownership of most of the world's resources by a handful of corporations and the use of these resources for the sole purpose of accumulating capital, the liberals and progressives also concede the eternal rule of capital. The few crumbs they and workers might get will be given willingly by capital if this will defuse stronger critiques of capital's legitimacy. Upon receiving these crumbs, labor leaders will then be duty-bound to condemn their radical brothers and sisters. What is happening now is much like what transpired when organized labor embraced labor-management cooperation. Employers admitted that they needed the workers to help make their enterprises more competitive. If workers would cooperate with management to raise productivity, the employers, in turn, would provide them with more security, allow them to learn new skills, and make them true partners in decision-making. Many trade-union leaders, often encouraged by progressive academics, bought this argument and made concessions on work rules, grievance procedures, and steady pay-raises that had taken years to win. But as numerous studies of these schemes have shown, management had no intention of ceding control to workers. Instead, these systems were the means by which employers enhanced their control at the same time that they began to wean workers away from their unions and secure their loyalty to

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the companies' competitive agenda. Predictably, those opposed to cooperation, like the "New Directions" movement in the UAW, have been marginalized by the leadership, denounced as radicals and cranks.

The power of capital to co-opt labor should not be underestimated. Important leaders like Sidney Hillman and Philip Murray of the CIO were co-opted by the Roosevelt administration, lured by flattery and positions on various boards and commissions. There was a real possibility for an independent labor party in the 1930s, but this prospect was derailed—with the active participation of the labor movement. Indeed, in the 1930s a sizable fraction of the Communist party was mesmerized by FDR and the New Deal and, during the war, communists were completely co-opted by the Democrats.

A third danger lies in the realities of the domestic scene and the disconnect between these and the new internationalism of the AFL-CIO. Before it can build meaningful relationships with workers in poor countries, it might be necessary for white workers to unite with workers of color here in the United States. How can a movement that cannot organize black workers in the South and Latino workers in the Southwest build effective bridges with workers in Asia, Africa, and Latin America? How can a movement which ignores the struggles for land by Native Americans make common cause with landless peasants in Ecuador or Colombia? How can a movement that does not publicize and fight against the racism of the U.S. prison system and the increasing power of the prison-industrial complex be taken seriously when it rails against prison labor in China?

The biggest problem domestically is that labor will not divorce itself from the Democratic Party. The position in which workers in poor nations find themselves is the direct outcome of the neoliberal policies championed and put into practice by the U.S. government, and these policies are those of both political parties. The Democrats advocate privatization, trade agreements, the WTO, and structural adjustment policies and oppose any attempts by poor nations to develop autonomously. How can international solidarity be sustained by the U.S. labor movement

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at the same time that this labor movement is in league with a party whose every act undermines solidarity? But if we ask ourselves in all candor if we think that the New Voices leadership is going to abandon what it has been doing for so long, the answer must be "no." It is true that the labor movement is at odds with the Democratic Party over admitting China to the WTO, but this difference is unlikely to push labor toward an independent politics. The neoliberal system will survive quite nicely with or without China in the WTO. And if the AFL-CIO succeeds in keeping China out of the WTO, where does it go from there? Will the corporations now benefitting from the cheap labor in China's export zones suffer? Will China's workers be better able to challenge the anti-working-class policies of their government? Will the protectionist spirit lurking underneath the AFL-CIO's WTO opposition be driven further underground or will it rise to the surface?

7

As Khalil Hassan argues, it is extremely unlikely that an entirely new and independent labor movement can be built today in the United States. Therefore, it will be necessary for leftists to work within or alongside the AFL-CIO. However, leftists must organize themselves into a coherent and disciplined force. Building on the movement for democratic control of union locals and in alliance with left workers in other progressive social movements, the left in labor can critically support whatever good things the AFL-CIO does, while pushing it in a more radical direction. The more strength the labor left gains, the more difficult it will be for it to be dislodged from the movement. From within our own organizations and unions, we can reach out to like-minded workers around the world with an international labor left as its goal. Groups such as the Transnational Information Exchange (TIE) have already begun to do this. TIE should be supported and its efforts extended and deepened.[8] Suggestions made by Hassan in his article in this issue should be debated and then implemented.

I have been somewhat harsh in my assessment of the possibility of organized labor in the United States helping to construct an international labor movement. But it is necessary to be blunt because the stakes are so high. Saying that the New Voices leaders

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are what they are—liberals, not radicals; limited opponents of neoliberalism, not enemies—is not blanket condemnation. But they are not all that the leaders of a labor movement need to be.

NOTES

1. My friend Elly Leary, who made helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay, reminded me that a third critical factor is the division of workers inside of each nation by gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, etc. Of course she is right, but I focus on nationalism and imperialism here because of the subject matter of the paper. Connections between internal and international divisions are brought out later in the argument.
2. See Paul Buhle, *Taking Care of Business: Samuel Gompers, George Meany, Lane Kirkland, and the Tragedy of American Labor* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999).
3. For details and references, see Michael D. Yates, *Why Unions Matter* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998).
4. See Michael D. Yates, "Braverman and the Class Struggle," *Monthly Review*, vol. 50, no. 8 (January 1999). For a more in-depth treatment, see Kim Moody, *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism* (London: Verso, 1988).
5. See Kim Moody, *Workers in a Lean World: Unions in the International Economy* (London: Verso, 1997); Tom Juravich & Kate Bronfenbrenner, *Ravenswood: The Steelworkers' Victory and the Revival of American Labor* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000); and Larry Cohen and Steve Early, "Defending Workers' Rights in the Global Economy: The CWA Experience," in Bruce Nissen, ed., *Which Direction for Organized Labor?* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999).
6. See my review of the Nissen book mentioned in note five, in *Labor History*, vol. 40, no. 4 (November 1999): 566.
7. Peter Rachleff, "Rupture or Continuity," *New Politics*, vol. VII , no. 4 (New Series) (Winter 2000).
8. On TIE, see Moody, *Workers in a Lean World.*

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The Future of the Labor Left

by Khalil Hassan

"The essence of trade unionism is social uplift."
— A. Philip Randolph

Introduction

Capitalism has been defined by both competition among capitalists and competition among workers. Workers regularly compete with one another for limited resources—specifically, for jobs and income. Capitalists initiate this competition to depress wages and working conditions and to insure that, in the struggle between capital and labor, capital is supreme.

Trade unions came into existence to address competition among workers, by taking wages out of competition and conducting struggles with capital over the surplus value created by the workers. Yet since the beginning of the U.S. labor movement in the 1830s, trade unions and trade unionists have taken different stances on how best to respond to the question of competition.

In the United States, for example, a split developed between two broad groupings. On the one hand, one group has advocated and practiced "exclusion." That is, they have articulated a vision of trade unionism that situates itself on the basis of narrowing the labor market. Generally, "exclusion" has been in the context of skilled or craft employment, but it has also been based upon race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, gender, or even bargaining

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units. Here the notion has been that by narrowing the labor market, the price of the labor power of those who are organized can increase.

Opposing the exclusionists have been the "inclusionists." This very broad grouping has held that the power of the working class comes from organizing all who can be organized. The inclusionist conceptual framework argues that maximum working-class strength and power is achieved through increasing numbers and union density within a given industry or region.

In U.S. labor history, these two tendencies have often been analyzed in a simplistic and structuralist fashion. Craft unionists have been assumed to be exclusionists, while industrial unions have been assumed to be inclusionists. This has not always been the case. It is true that many of the staunchest advocates of industrial unionism have also linked advocacy with a vision of inclusionism. One thing that has always been true, however, is that labor's left-wing has been firmly situated in the inclusionist wing of labor. In fact, the fight for inclusionism has been at the core of the left's identity and generally the thread that weaves together its program.

In addition to being inclusionist, labor's left has historically advanced a vision for the future of organized labor. At some of its most advanced and heroic moments, labor's left-wing (the IWW, for example) has articulated visions of postcapitalist society; situated trade unionism within the struggle for democracy and against fascism (communists and socialists in the 1930s); or linked trade unionism with other progressive social movements (as the League of Revolutionary Black Workers did in the late 1960s).

Varying organizational forms have accompanied the development of labor's left-wing, but one thing has been consistent. Labor's left-wing has almost always had a distinct identity. This characteristic, I should hasten to add, was not simply programmatic but was also one of conscience. That is, labor's left-wing represented the conscience of organized labor and saw itself as conducting the fight for the heart and soul of trade unionism.

Today, there is great urgency in reflecting on the labor left. This is because no coherent labor left exists today, though one

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is very badly needed. The "New Voices" leadership represents an opening for labor left. As the anti-World Trade Organization (WTO) demonstrations in Seattle illustrate, there is now a willingness on the part of organized labor to engage in what have been for its leaders fairly unconventional struggles, and there appears to be a growing basis for a coalition of forces against neoliberalism and globalization. Unfortunately, there are also signs today that the alliance that brought forth the New Voices leadership is fraying. There are staunchly right-wing elements in organized labor who would like nothing better than to regain their power. And there are conservative trade unionists, sometimes posing as independent-minded leaders with their ears to the ground, who are becoming restive. Whether for criticism of an alleged lack of attention to the manufacturing sector or the highly controversial early endorsement of Al Gore, the loyalty of some of the New Voices' original allies has become questionable. While neither group has coalesced into a formal opposition, the lack of a coherent labor left gives free reign to the right and allows for the real possibility of a reversal in labor's direction.

It is with this situation in mind that this essay is offered. It shares many observations of current conditions with other leftist writers such as Fernando Gapasin, Michael Yates, Michael Eisenscher, Jane Slaughter, and Kim Moody. These and many other authors have offered insights and suggested directions. This paper is indebted to them, and while it shares many of their views, it offers additional observations and suggestions for the road ahead.

Today's Labor Left and the Conjuncture

For most of the 1990s, labor's left-wing has had only half an identity. Over the past two decades, the labor left has exhibited three general tendencies. First, left-wing individuals, in the wake of declining or collapsing progressive organizations, decided that their best route for influencing change was to "bore from within" the trade-union bureaucracy. Second, many leftists situated themselves in such organizations as the Labor Party, the New Party, and Jobs with Justice, and have focused their efforts outside of the trade-union movement proper. That is, they have concen-

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trated on the stand that working people should take toward a series of programmatic issues. For example (and this is not meant as a criticism of this specific effort), the Labor Party initiated a campaign to amend the Constitution to guarantee jobs and income. Such a campaign explicitly represented labor progressives' and leftists' ideas about what labor should demand. Implicitly, it represents the view of the stand organized labor should be taking in the United States. The thinking here (and this may be so for some in the first tendency) is that by changing the external relationship of the labor movement to the world, the inner essence of the labor movement will also change. Or perhaps these leftists believe that the reforms being enacted by the New Voices leadership are heading labor in the right direction.

Third, some leftists have endorsed what can be called oppositionism which, simply put, requires adherents to "Just say 'no' to the labor bureaucracy." This grousing element simply criticizes whatever initiatives come from labor's leadership. Commentators in this tendency, such as Massachusetts-based Steve Early, have little good to say about New Voices reforms, and typically see hidden agendas and dangers for workers or argue that nothing of substance has happened at all.

These three tendencies (in contrast to some smaller groups, such as Black Workers for Justice and *Labor Notes* magazine) have not examined and organized around the *inner dynamics of the U.S. trade-union movement itself.* Rarely, to paraphrase Randolph, have they defined the essence of trade unionism, a definition that takes place not simply in theory but also in practice.

The disarray on the labor left has meant that neither coherent program nor consensus direction on the way forward for organized labor has been articulated. This is not an academic matter. First, as suggested above, the opening for the left provided by New Voices may close. Although the New Voices team defeated the bastion of Cold-War trade-unionism that was the old AFL-CIO, this does not mean that the labor right has surrendered or vanished. The right-wing Social Democrats USA (SDUSA), a prominent presence in the old regime, has been the source of a certain amount of misinformation and surfaces periodically to

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launch a redbaiting missile or two at the AFL-CIO leadership. More importantly, the implosion of the Ron Carey administration in the Teamsters and Jimmy Hoffa Jr.'s rise to power represent a serious long-term threat. Still more ominous are the conservative tendencies within two of the major manufacturing unions, the United Auto Workers and the Machinists, both influential in the New Voices' victory. While these industrial unions, along with others like the Steelworkers, do have some commitment to organizing, none of them show much indication of a long-term vision of the labor movement. AFL-CIO president Sweeney has extended himself to many of the old guard supporters of his rival presidential candidate, Tom Donahue, such as the Communications Workers and the American Federation of Teachers, but his own key allies retain varying degrees of loyalty to the New Voices coalition.

Tensions within the New Voices alliance can be seen at the political level. The 1999 rush to endorse Al Gore as the Democratic Party's candidate for President flew in the face of the stated commitment of the New Voices team to emphasize issues rather than candidates. This, along with the embarrassment associated with Sweeney's signing of the broad-brush letter of endorsement of the Clinton Administration's overall objectives for the WTO, has strained relations within the New Voices coalition. The manufacturing unions are uneasy with what they see as Sweeney's lack of concern for their issues, especially trade. And Hoffa, Jr. used the Gore endorsement to declare, almost cynically, the need for labor to advance independent political action.

Second, the economy is booming, but in a context in which there are many problems. This should be generating increased union membership and density, but it is not. Labor markets are tight and inflation is low, which should mean that workers are organizing to share in the growth and protect themselves against the problems. Many workers are poorly and contingently employed. But jobs are plentiful, so unionization could help these workers. Wealth polarization in the United States is at despicable levels; it is only greater in Russia. Wealth is more unequal here than at any time since the 1930s. Unionization could help to

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rectify this inequality. Close to half of the world is in recession, a fact hovering over the United States like an apparition. Now is the time for workers to try to protect themselves against any possible downturn in the economy. Unfortunately, while organized labor has staved off continued decline, it has not experienced dramatic growth. Even those workers in unions have made only modest demands of capital, seemingly in awe of capital's overwhelming power.

Third, the composition of the working class is changing, along many axes. There are more service jobs. More high-skill employment is contingent. More low-skill manufacturing and service jobs are unstable. Nearly all workers, whether in the small core workforces now favored by many employers or in the periphery of contingent employment, are threatened by downsizing, subcontracting, and generalized displacement. The result of these changes is that the insecurity of workers is heightened, despite income growth. Moreover, these changes alter the subjective feeling workers have toward employment. These problems carry with them several strategic dilemmas for organizing strategy, both for the trade-union movement in general, as well as for the labor left as it tries to rekindle genuine class-consciousness.

The working class is becoming browner and more female, which generates a variety of contradictions. The structure of AFL-CIO and member union leadership does not match this change. The problem is no longer primarily between black workers and white leadership, but includes contradictions of gender and oppressed minorities. In addition, an interethnic contradiction has become more important as working-class demographics have changed—a problem not given enough attention by the labor movement or the labor left. Entire sectors are witnessing shifts in their workforces. In poultry, for example, African-American workers are either being replaced by Latino immigrants or moving out of the sector as Latinos move in. When this happens and organized labor seems to pay more attention to the new workers, it is as if kerosene was thrown on an open fire.

Fourth, neoliberalism and the attendant, increasing internationalization of capital has whittled away at accepted standards

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of employment here in the United States, but in doing so has forced the question of the relationship of international trade-union movements to one another. Fundamentally, it raises the question of whether organized labor has its own vision of the global economy. For while actual and threatened globalization provides the material basis for proletarian internationalism, it also provides fertile ground for a reactionary agenda such as that promoted by Patrick Buchanan. A reactionary program, in turn, plays itself out here where there are all sorts of interethnic and interunion rivalries, and can lead to a "cut the best deal" mentality in which it is acceptable for one group of workers to gain at the expense of others.

The "Ideology" of Organizing

A fifth factor that contributes to a sense of urgency for labor's left is the hollowness of what can be called the "ideology" of organizing. The labor movement has been in a state of decline since the mid 1950s. Until the 1980s, most labor leaders blamed this decline on external factors such as hostile labor law (Taft-Hartley), the shift of production away from union strongholds in manufacturing, globalization, and long-term economic stagnation. Before the 1970s, forces on the left did argue that labor's own failure to organize new workers was at the heart of its decline, but these cries fell on deaf ears. Then-president of the AFL-CIO, George Meany, stated remarkably, "Why should we worry about organizing groups of people who do not want to be organized? . . . Frankly, I used to worry about the size of the membership. But quite a few years ago, I just stopped worrying about it, because to me it doesn't make any difference."

During the late 1960s and the 1970s, elements of the labor left challenged the myopia of the trade-union movement on several fronts. The caucus movement of the late 1960s fought against oppressive working conditions as well as the bureaucratization of the labor movement. The League of Revolutionary Black Workers merged the Black Power movement with trade-union militancy. During the 1973–1974 recession and shortly afterwards, activists began to demand that the labor movement or-

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ganize not only the unorganized but its own members. Outspoken militants like the late Bay Area Carpenters Union leader Clyde Johnson issued eloquent appeals to organize the unorganized, predicting the implications of labor's decline to come. Yet little was done in the upper echelons to respond to these warnings.

By the 1980s, the demand to organize began to take hold. Several unions, including the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the Communication Workers of America, embraced the need for change and the devotion of significant resources to organizing. A number of these unions helped start Jobs with Justice, a labor/community-based organization formed to fight for workers' rights and to support organizing the unorganized. The rhetoric of organizing became a clarion call. In fact, it began to evolve into an *ideology of organizing.* The widely read progressive labor journal *Labor Research Review* began to popularize a contradiction which it defined as being at the heart and soul of labor's quandary, namely an opposition between an "organizing model" and a "servicing model" of unionism. This dichotomy caught on like wildfire and became the subject of numerous articles, discussions, and conferences. In essence, it was argued that, since the 1950s, the trade-union movement had spent too much time and money servicing, that is, taking care of the existing membership, the effects of which were to demobilize the members and turn the relationship between members and their unions into one analogous to that between lawyers or insurance companies and their clients. Instead, unions should have been utilizing the organizing approach, the heart of which was member mobilization and self-awareness. The quintessential practice of the organizing approach was the *contract campaign,* an all-round activation of the members to participate in collective bargaining. As adopted by several unions, the contract campaign entailed the creation of contract action teams, coalition building, and member education. The same techniques could also be used to organize new members.

The organizing approach was, in an important sense, a positive development. It insisted that conscious efforts were needed to address labor's decline and to build power. But support was not,

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as some progressives insisted, the litmus test for determining whether one stood on the progressive or reactionary side of the aisle. This is because the organizing model did not represent an ideological approach antithetical to the business unionism practiced by Meany and his brethren. The objectives of organizing can originate in a variety of ideological tendencies. The activity of organizing, though progressive in the sense of strengthening the working class in its daily battle with capital, can also serve the objectives of labor leaders who are attempting to establish or reestablish more of a *modus vivendi* with capital rather than building real working-class power. An extreme example of the problem with turning organizing into an ideology is found in the evolution of the Carpenters' Union under president Doug McCarron. Using methods borrowed from corporate America, McCarron has dramatically restructured the union by significantly centralizing and committing it to organizing. Nevertheless, McCarron's approach is not based on progressive politics, but rather on a maverick sense of his relationship to the rest of organized labor and a narrow sense of building power for the Carpenters' Union. McCarron has made it abundantly clear that his vision of trade unionism does not involve addressing issues outside of wages, hours, and working conditions. Yet, his commitment to organizing has led even some progressives to overlook his vision and objectives. In doing so, progressives also overlook the larger question of the actual vision of the trade-union movement and its place in a capitalist society.

The Progressives' Technocratic Approach

In the absence of a large-scale, strategic vision about class and class struggle, the response to the crisis of organized labor tends toward the technocratic, that is, toward technical or structural answers to the dilemma of the trade-union movement. The call for organizing the unorganized becomes the be-all and end-all of the movement. The New Voices leadership correctly identified the structural and technical limitations of existing trade unionism. Yet they remained trapped in a liberal/progressive paradigm and were, therefore, only able to offer elements of a

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solution, framed in terms of the slogan: *changing to organize.*

According to the New Voices leadership, changing to organize meant that unions had to be willing to do several things. First, they had to have the *political will* to change, to have the courage to take the steps necessary to revitalize themselves. Second, they had to *devote resources to organizing* (as much as 30 percent of their budgets), even if this meant shifting resources away from those currently devoted to servicing their existing membership. Third, they had to put in place an *organizing director* and staff devoted to organizing and creating an organizing plan. Fourth, they had to place organizing within the context of an overall *plan.* This meant moving away from scatter-shot, "hot shop" organizing toward more strategically placed interventions. Fifth, they had to encourage *member involvement.* The existing membership had to be tapped as both a base of support and an organizing resource.

There is nothing wrong with this list. It identifies the key factors necessary to bring about change, and it represents a clear advance over the type of guidance provided by past AFL-CIO leadership. Yet, much is missing from this list. It is silent on just those problems which a labor left can and must put forward if it hopes to revitalize the labor movement. Consider the following list of items:

1. *The Question of Worker Power:* The dominant liberal/progressive view on the question of power is ambiguous. When it is discussed, it is largely in the context of bargaining power with employers or bargaining power in industries. What is rarely discussed is transformative power, the power to reshape the economy and politics of the United States. Thus, the imperative for organizing is to focus on what workers are not getting at the bargaining table because of declining union density. The question of labor's relationship to the state is limited either to critical (and not so critical) support of Democratic Party initiatives or rhetoric regarding labor's need to have independent positions on policy matters. Some discussion of workplace power does emerge in exchanges on worker-participation programs, but there is no consensus within the labor left, much less the trade-union movement, on the role of such programs in advancing

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shop-floor power or power in the larger economy.

2. *Class and Class Struggle:* Most union leaders view themselves as part of a trade association or grouping of trade associations. Although the rhetoric of *class* has increased markedly over the last several years, the implications of this rhetoric have not been drawn out. The paradigm for today's labor leadership was shaped largely by New Deal politics and the ensuing relationship which labor gained with the state, the Democratic Party, and several social movements. Though organized labor saw itself as speaking for or at least supporting the disenfranchised, it did not position itself as a class movement. It viewed itself as a particular interest-group among other interest-groups. In time, it became harder and harder for the trade-union movement to identify with unorganized workers, not just because the two groups had different demographics but also because of their vastly different experiences under capitalism. This was especially true for the leadership, but there was much truth to this for the membership as well. This fact emerged during the mid-1990's debates on healthcare. A conservative impulse struck both leaders and members when faced with the possibility of a dramatic change in healthcare. Most union members had some health insurance, and they were reluctant to put that in jeopardy despite the reality of some fifty million persons without healthcare. Solidarity, not always forever. . . .

3. *Member Control and Leadership Development:* While the organizing model placed great emphasis on member involvement and mobilization, it did not speak to the internal power dynamics in the union movement itself. This is not merely a matter of union democracy, conceived simply in terms of issues like direct election of union officers. In what sense, it must be asked, do workers actually run their unions? In what sense can one say that the views of the members are truly sought out? In what sense are the members the subjects of their own liberation and not merely dues payers for whom things are done? These questions of member control are simply off the screen for most union leaders. At best, we find "progressive" paternalism/maternalism, where the leaders are doing what they believe to be best for the mem-

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bers. In both the Carpenters Union and the SEIU, two unions most people see as operating at opposite ends of the spectrum, we find the same problem: restructuring to organize but little attention to making member control standard operating procedure.

It must be added that the issue of member control has racial, ethnic, and gender dimensions. Specifically, as the membership changes in composition and character, the failure of the leadership to reflect the membership more appropriately has an almost colonial taint to it. The fight for membership control, in certain cases, takes on the character of the struggle against national oppression and patriarchy, and becomes extremely complicated when the largely white leadership of a union organization defines itself as leftist or progressive and the opposition (based within an emerging demographic group) does not necessarily have the same politics. While advancing politics solely on a racial, ethnic, or gender basis is wrong, the failure of a supposedly progressive or leftist leadership to raise the issue of member control (as well as the matter of leadership reflecting membership) will almost inevitably lead to internal strife and the undermining of a left/progressive agenda.

4. *The Global Economy:* Many of today's labor leaders have been willing to speak plainly about the devastating impact of neoliberal capitalism. There has been an important break with the treasonous Cold-War trade unionism of the past. Relations have been built with several important labor centers around the world, many of which had been opponents of the U.S. trade-union movement during the Cold War. Yet, this does not translate into an independent labor position on the global economy and its implications for international worker solidarity. The uproar surrounding the WTO's November 1999 gathering in Seattle is just one example of what is missing. Why should organized labor give support to an institution which, along with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, aims to lock national economies into the neoliberal paradigm—a model with either passive or nonexistent trade unions? Little discussion occurs concerning solidarity-building with *countries* of the global South, which are trying to develop and desperately need foreign aid and

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investment. In large part, deliberations about the countries of the South focus on their potential threat to U.S. employment. The exceptions to this, unfortunately, tend to prove the rule. AFL-CIO support for the April 2000 Jubilee 2000 debt-relief mobilization, while quite sincere, did not strike a chord among most affiliates.

Most labor leaders fail to see that a consensus has developed within global capital that for the most part excludes labor and the working class from consideration. While Clinton made tough-sounding speeches about labor rights in Seattle, this should be seen for what it was–the result of pressure from labor and other progressive social movements as well as domestic political considerations. This did not mean that Clinton had shifted away from a complete embrace of neoliberalism. Organized labor, here and in many other parts of the advanced capitalist world, does not comprehend that the Keynesian wing of capital has been defeated or has switched sides. Thus, labor's response to the changes in global capitalism must dramatically break with the hope of strategic alignments with sections of capital.

5. *Domestic National Oppression:* There is a tendency in the trade-union movement to identify the antiracist struggle with the fight for "diversity." In other words, the cornerstone of the struggle is changing the composition of labor organizations or even just helping various groups get along. This is clearly insufficient. The struggles in the U.S. South, for example, are not solely battles to increase unionization. They are simultaneously battles for political power for African Americans in the South. They are not just "community struggles," because they take place in communities and in workplaces and are fought in a variety of institutions. The struggles in the Southwest, to use another example, are not solely actions to incorporate immigrants into the trade-union movement; they are also the site of struggles for land and political power by Native Americans and Chicanos. Although twentieth-century labor history gives us examples of unions stepping forward to support struggles against national oppression (for example, the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers in the Southwest), this has not been a dominant practice of U.S.

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trade unionism.

The rebuilding and reshaping of U.S. trade unionism is taking place at a moment when the forces of white supremacy have ratcheted up their attacks on affirmative action, basic democratic rights, and political power for oppressed nationalities. It is highly unlikely that labor renewal will succeed in an atmosphere of such attacks, where important social movements of the oppressed nationalities are being undermined. This issue is almost completely ignored by organized labor, which is symptomatic of a narrowness of vision—a problem which exists to varying degrees in the labor left itself.

What's a (Labor) Left to Do?: Building a New Unionism

> Social unionism is social in the sense that it is concerned with broad social and political issues, as well as the immediate concerns of its members. It aims to be a social force for transformation. Its goal is democracy and socialism. Its influence on society is based on its organized power, its capacity to mobilize, its socioeconomic program and policies and its participation in political and social alliances. It is committed to workers' control and democracy, and to maintaining its character as a movement. It is proactive and effective. It is able to negotiate and monitor complex agreements with government and employers. . . .
>
> –*Book 3: Report from the September Commission*, Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), Sixth National Congress, p. 17.

In the face of neoliberal global capitalism, labor movements around the world are in the midst of a major debate. Most models of trade unionism have been called into question by the rampage of capital and its flagrant unwillingness to come to any sort of accommodation with the working class and the trade-union movement. Tripartite alliances of business, government, and labor are unraveling; where they do exist, it is on the basis of a much weakened labor movement. To meet this challenge, a twenty-first century unionism must be constructed. This is the task of the labor left. The COSATU comrades utilize the term "social unionism." Others have used formulations such as "transformative unionism," "class struggle unionism," "social movement unionism," and "social justice unionism." I will use "social justice unionism," though the terms do not really matter. What

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I want to get to is the essence of an alternative model of unionism.

One of the difficulties with the organizing model is that it did not challenge the basic paradigm of U.S. trade unionism. It sought a solution for labor's crisis from within the box, so to speak. More militance, more activism, more organizing and the labor movement would rekindle. This approach, while an advance over what went before, is fundamentally flawed. Simply put, it is not enough and time is slipping through our fingers.

Much of what COSATU argues for in the quote from the Sixth National Congress applies also to the type of unionism for which we should fight in the United States. Underlying it all should be the notion of situating the labor left within the inclusionist wing of trade unionism and defining trade unionism itself in inclusionist terms. Ultimately this will mean connecting the fight for socialism and democracy to the work of rebuilding trade unionism. Opposition to the status quo, whether within the trade-union movement or within the larger society, is insufficient. As many of us have discovered time and again, we need to have some answers when we are questioned about our principles.

The vision of the New Voices coalition is at a critical juncture, in which it has come under attack from forces on the right and in which there is dissent on the left. This does not mean in any way that the reforms instituted in the AFL-CIO and in several affiliates have been of little consequence. Clearly millions of workers need to be unionized and efforts such as "changing to organize" have only touched the surface. So much needs to be done, even within the current New Voices' framework. The problems are inertia and gravity. The conservative tug of labor/management relations in the United States and the dominance of a trade-union bureaucracy that often places more weight on protecting itself and its perks than advancing the cause of the working class are like anchors stuck in the mud. The publicity which accompanied the new AFL-CIO leadership, the great union victories won at Ravenswood, by United Parcel Service (UPS) employees, by workers in the auto industry, and important organizing victories such as the homecare workers in Los Angeles have all been significant. But these victories have

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not translated into a renewed mass movement.

Among most trade-union leaders, there is a metaphysical notion of how mass movements emerge. Unions and the labor movement are assumed to be the center of the universe, and all that is needed is for labor to will a mass movement into existence, irrespective of the existence of external factors and in isolation from other social movements. Other social movements are seen as additions to what the union movement is doing.

The truth is, however, that mass struggles tend to be affected and to affect other social movements. The idea that a reemergence of organized labor can take place in the absence of other social struggles has no historical basis. During major periods of social upsurge such as the 1930s and the 1960s, mass movements overlapped and impacted one another. People are more willing to struggle when the culture and reality of struggle are pervasive. In other words, workers will organize unions, not just because other workers are doing so, but because other people are engaged in struggle, whether in tenants' rights organizing, fights around police brutality, or demands for civil rights. Some of the most interesting and exciting union organizing in the 1960s and early 1970s was a direct outgrowth of the Civil Rights Movement—for example, the Charleston, South Carolina hospital strike of 1969. Sadly, organized labor learned little from this experience and failed to appreciate its significance. A second example, from the 1980s, was the Jesse Jackson presidential candidacy. What Jackson understood and championed was the interconnection of the economic struggle and the struggle for democracy. In this sense, Jackson was way ahead of most leaders of organized labor and struck a chord among the rank and file. Most of the trade-union leadership was not prepared to embrace this message of rainbow unionism and, as a consequence, missed an historic moment.

A conclusion from this is that the labor left not only needs to advance a program of labor solidarity, but it also needs to promote *intermovement solidarity* and the sharing of experiences in the different sectors and trades, in order to deatomize the experience of workers. Learning about and from other social

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movements can have a direct impact on the strategies and tactics that unfold within organized labor. In this sense, the term *social movement unionism* has a particular ring. This has been historically demonstrated and is true today. Most commentators on the anti-WTO demonstrations noted the developing relationship between union demonstrators and those from other progressive social movements. Workers develop class consciousness not simply from understanding their own experiences but from understanding those of other social strata.

A second matter relative to a new unionism is that trade unionism and the trade-union movement must stand for something. This does not mean a laundry list of issues nor does it mean the ideology of organizing. Neither works and neither is compelling. Twenty-first-century trade unionism must have a social mission that galvanizes other forces in society. This is what is currently lacking from the trade-union movement. When the New Voices leadership took over the AFL-CIO in 1995, they embarked on a high profile "America Needs a Raise" campaign for an increase in the minimum wage. This turned out to be an energizing experience, touching workers in many quarters. The union movement appeared to have a mission beyond its own borders. In the most recent past, there has been little of this. The Seattle events and globalization may indicate a possibility of broadening the social mission of organized labor but it is too early to say. What has been the case has been an introversion by much of organized labor and a disconnect between the task of organizing and the task of building class power.

In order to break out of inertia, the following points should be considered:

The Moment—the window remains open: The opening in the trade-union movement created by the New Voices victory remains. There has been no return to Cold-War trade unionism, little ideological repression of the left, and even a willingness by the leadership of organized labor to move to the left on certain matters. Nevertheless, what the labor left must realize is that the balance of forces in the AFL-CIO at the level of national leadership may be in the process of shifting toward the center-right.

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This could, paradoxically, lead to unions that pursue organizing but are not building a labor movement and certainly not building working-class power. The labor left must utilize this continued window to get its message out there and to fight for concrete change.

Our Foundation—internally we must struggle for inclusion and transformation: Our internal vision must focus on building a class movement rather than a new and improved trade association. In terms of organizing strategy, the labor left needs to fight for concrete policies (specifically targets and sectors) that broaden the base of trade unionism and may energize working-class forces that seek organization. The labor left must situate itself within the inclusionist wing of labor and fight to organize immigrants and the South and to make organized labor a movement of and for working women. The movement must extend itself into the contingent sector of temporary, part-time, and contract employees. Through archaic labor laws and employer machinations, workers from this sector are too often ignored by unions and unionism, to the point that many believe that unions are irrelevant to their fight for survival. Social justice unionism must reverse this and fight for forms of organization that unite with the experiences and reality of this sector. This means that the existing union movement must devote resources to risky organizing experiments since there is no blueprint for organizing here.

Inclusion is one part of the answer; the other part is transformation. Unions and unionism need to be transformed. This includes the relationship of the member to the organization; the relationship of staff to the members and to the organization as a whole; the role of the union in the workplace; and the role of the union in the community. On the rare occasions that transformation is addressed, even by the labor left, it is viewed as an organizational problem that a set of consultants can resolve. But transformation must go to the actual mission of trade unions as organizations of workers to advance the interests of workers.

In the Real World—labor needs a new social mission and that mission must be connected to the fight for power: Trade unionism needs a new social mission on par with the struggle for democracy in the

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1930s. Glimmers of this could be seen in the "America Needs a Raise" campaign and in the public's response to the UPS strike. Organized labor seemed, in those moments, to speak beyond its borders to the questions and concerns of millions of working people. The Labor Party argues that the fight for national health-care reform can be the spark that helps labor develop its social mission. We in the labor left should *vigorously* support this. But we should set our sights higher. Labor's new social mission can be found in the struggle against neoliberalism and global capitalism. This does not mean abstractions about international solidarity. It does mean seizing upon the upsurge created by the Seattle anti-WTO response, taking on matters of trade, sustainable economic development (both here and in the countries of the global South), rearticulating the role of the public sector, and insisting on workers' rights as human rights (which includes concrete support for union organizing, both domestically and internationally).

How Do We Get There from Here?

To build social justice unionism, the labor left must integrate both theoretical debate and actual struggle. This means more than simply an exchange of papers. The labor left must theorize—that is, reflect on its experiences and elevate them so that a program can be developed. But many of the nuts and bolts of the actual process will result from actions taken.

With this in mind, the labor left needs to consider a project which can help realize social justice unionism and influence the trade-union movement in the United States. Such a project should have as its objectives the development of a new social mission and begin to articulate the notion of transformation.

The project needs to be concrete. It needs to have a real-world focus rather than being something that is primarily oriented—implicitly or explicitly—to making the labor left feel good about itself. It needs to have objectives that attempt to alter the status quo, both internal to organized labor and in the larger society.

The project also needs to be broad-based and antisectarian—conceptualized as something which goes beyond a specific po-

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litical tendency. It cannot begin with a detailed programmatic agenda that dots each 'i' and crosses each 't' and forecloses broader discussion. It must see itself as a work in progress.

Finally, the project must be thought of as a means to advance a transformative notion of trade unionism. The project must begin the rearticulation of trade unionism as it relates to younger workers, the traditionally disenfranchised, and those sectors of the working class that have hitherto felt alienated by or excluded from trade unionism.

Therefore, the labor left should first begin to construct a pole, not in opposition to the New Voice leadership, but in order to advance toward a transformation of the trade-union movement. The stand I suggest is one of *critical support.* Not a stance of snide criticism or opposition, but of independence based on a specific vision. We must interact with the New Voices leadership and their allies among the affiliates, on the basis of a united front. Our objectives overlap in many places, *but they are not identical.* We should not place ourselves in the role of criticizing the New Voices leadership for failing to be leftists; we must, however, offer a left vision to rebuild labor and fight for power.

It may be possible to begin to unite around a specific aspect of the *trade/globalization/neoliberalism* contradiction. This might take the form of developing a position or platform on the trade debate and the stance organized labor should take (around the social clause, for example). The labor left could use this issue to begin an educational effort that examines what is actually happening with globalization: where the jobs are going; who is the enemy; what is the role of the U.S. government; why building solidarity with the countries of the global South is important. The labor left could begin making specific demands on the unions to support organizing efforts in the global South, rejecting the typical imperialist approach of the Cold-War days and building relations of real support. This could also include urging the trade-union movement to make specific demands on government regarding relations with the countries of the global South, such as economic development funds and loan forgiveness. The long-term goal here is to have labor develop a working-class view

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of the global economy.

A turn to the global South is not pulling an idea out of a hat, but reflects dramatic changes already underway. The dominance of neoliberalism means that labor strategy cannot be based upon a hoped-for alliance with more humane sectors of capital. In addition, globalization has heightened the material basis for working-class solidarity. Each time a major or minor company threatens to move, the issue of globalization confronts the worker in its starkness. Finally, the fight against global capital is not a fight in the abstract, but must be a concrete fight within the nation-state (and in solidarity with other movements) for power. It is the capitalist state that advances the strategy of globalization; globalization is not some runaway train over which no one has control.

A second and separate aspect of the work of the labor left could be in the area of transformation described above. The attempts that have been made to transform the trade-union movement have been top-down and have failed to develop real roots. Therefore, efforts must go back to rebuilding a rank-and-file movement. Several years ago, the New Directions Movement, which emerged out of struggles in the UAW, set up what they called Solidarity Schools. These are alternative educational efforts directed at rank-and-file activists. These schools have received very good reviews from those who have participated in them, as teachers or students. The labor left needs to utilize either the vehicle of the Solidarity Schools or something similar to develop the leadership of rank-and-file activists, much as the Highlander Center did during the 1930s and 1940s for the CIO. This effort can be conceptualized as something like "labor education plus," that is, extending the boundaries of existing labor education to develop a corps of activists committed to social justice and class-conscious unionism. Such an educational effort would not be value-neutral, but partisan, with a view toward what twenty-first-century unionism should come to represent.

Thirdly, there needs to be a struggle for power within the trade-union movement. Those who suggest turning away from the union movement, largely out of justifiable frustrations with

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its glacial pace of change, can win one's sympathy but not one's support. Forming a separate union movement in the current period is unlikely. The fight needs to take place within the ranks of the existing movement, but it is not just a fight to place "good people" in high places. It should involve the identification and strengthening of real leaders from within the class to run for office, particularly at the local union and central labor council level (at this stage) on the basis of a program and organization.

Union reformers come and go and too often are viewed as individual messiahs who exist to rescue the organization from decadence. Yet the problem is rarely with "bad" individuals, but with trade unionism that promotes various forms of literal and figurative corruption. This problem is not resolved through great individuals, though great individuals can and do play a major role in bringing about change. There must be movements and organizations that can sustain the reform efforts, such as the Teamsters for a Democratic Union which, whatever its weaknesses, has held high the banner of a different form of Teamster unionism, even under very adverse circumstances.

It might be useful to draw an analogy from earlier activity of sections of the labor left in order to conceptualize our new tasks. One can argue that the unraveling of the old AFL-CIO, led by Lane Kirkland, began in 1987. In that year, a march on Washington, DC, was held with the twin themes of opposition to apartheid in South Africa and U.S. policy in Central America. To the surprise of many, several large unions broke ranks with the Kirkland administration and supported the protest. There was a significant degree of labor involvement in the entire mobilization. Lane Kirkland was reported to be furious that AFL-CIO affiliates would conduct such a rogue operation and not follow lock-step in the path of Cold-War trade unionism. Things were never quite the same after that.

That AFL-CIO affiliates were willing to break ranks did not occur out of the blue. There had been discussions and struggle going on in the trade-union movement for much of the 1980s. As the situation intensified in Central America, with the U.S.-backed contra war against the Sandinistas and U.S. involvement

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in El Salvador and Guatemala, sections of the labor left involved themselves in a variety of organizational forms in the trade-union movement. Networks and ad hoc committees began to struggle around U.S. foreign policy. Materials were circulated, resolutions were passed and, in some cases, major skirmishes took place at union conventions. On a smaller scale, similar work was done around South Africa. Efforts were made to get the AFL-CIO to stop creating mischief, and this work helped to change AFL-CIO policy toward COSATU and the African National Congress (ANC).

The struggle around Central America and South Africa had clear objectives and it also had organization. Not all the networks were the same, but little change would have taken place had it not been for organization. The labor left was able, often through sophisticated united-front tactics, to alter the internal debate and, indeed, to win impressive victories. The breaking of the ranks of the AFL-CIO around U.S. foreign policy in 1987 was no small accomplishment

Concluding Thoughts

The fight against global capitalism and neoliberalism has begun to emerge as a struggle of the U.S. working class. Contrary to pundits who believed that such concerns were irrelevant to most workers, the Seattle anti-WTO demonstrations made clear that the eyes and minds of millions of U.S. workers are focused on globalization and its impact on their everyday lives.

Organized labor must take advantage of this and lead the struggle. Otherwise, the larger, non-union working class will perceive the trade-union movement and trade unionism generally to be (at best) a nice, unattainable idea (note: close to half of all workers would like to be in a union), or, at worst, an irrelevant instrument from a bygone era.

While current efforts at organizing the unorganized, changing and developing central labor councils and state federations of labor, and winning good contracts must be actively supported by the labor left, in and of themselves they are insufficient. They are insufficient because they lack that compelling vision that will lead workers to make the extraordinary sacrifices necessary in

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order to build a larger political movement capable of blunting neoliberalism and articulating an alternative. To achieve that level of intensity, the movement must not be one with old bottles and new wine—to reverse a popular saying—but must instead begin to see itself as a *class movement in transformation.* This should be the direction advanced by the labor left, with all deliberate speed.

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World Labor Needs Independence and Solidarity

by David Bacon

Introduction

Within weeks of the Seattle demonstrations against the World Trade Organization (WTO), thousands of workers at India's state power company struck to prevent the privatization of electricity generation and distribution in Uttar Pradesh. Despite the jailing of hundreds of their leaders, they succeeded in halting it—at least for a time. Meanwhile, in ports along the subcontinent's coast, thousands more longshore workers also stopped work over privatization.

Both battles are part of a class war against procapitalist economic reforms. Not just in India, but around the world, workers have been fighting for over two decades to keep the social gains they won in the years following the Second World War. These struggles dramatize the new problems workers face in the global economy, as well as their refusal to accept passively its new (or not-so-new) priorities.

Turning national enterprises over to private owners is a key component of these reforms—the hallmark of the neoliberal transformation of national economies. Privatization is imposed

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by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (and now the WTO) on governments around the globe, through loan conditions, structural adjustment programs, and trade sanctions.

Privatization opens up important sections of the economies of countries like India to transnational corporate investment. Even more important, it reduces the ability of states to control their national economies and use that control to promote social goals rather than profitmaking, whether through investing in strategic industries, subsidizing prices for farmers and workers, or maintaining social benefits, high wages, and unionization. Privatization, however, has consequences that make inevitable opposition to it by unions and workers. Almost invariably, workers at privatized enterprises face huge layoffs and wage cuts, as private owners seek to cut labor costs.

The transformation of national economies around the world, in which privatization plays a key role, has forced world labor to debate the meaning of international working-class solidarity. Part of that argument surfaced in Seattle over the issue of international labor standards and their enforcement. This debate will grow even more heated as workers discuss not only ways of fighting growing corporate power but revisit even more basic questions. Should profitmaking and high productivity be the overriding criteria in making economic decisions? Do countries have a right to control their own economic development? And should labor challenge private ownership itself or merely argue about the conditions under which workers sell their labor power to corporate employers?

The Cost of Privatization and Structural Adjustment to Workers

In 1997, one railroad in Mexico—the 6521-kilometer Pacific North line—was sold to Jorge Larrea's Grupo Mexico, resulting in the reduction of the railroad's workforce of thirteen thousand people by more than half. The plan was met with months of wildcat strikes, which paralyzed operations for a time but which were ultimately unable to stop the cuts.

As privatization has moved from industry to industry in Mex-

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ico, its once-powerful official unions have been gutted. Three-quarters of the country's workforce belonged to unions three decades ago. Union membership is now less than 30 percent. In the state-owned oil company (PEMEX), about 72 percent of the workforce is unionized. But when the collateral petrochemical industry was privatized over the last decade and a half, the unionization rate fell to 7 percent. New, private owners like Larrea reduced the membership of the railway workers union from ninety thousand to thirty-six thousand during the same period.

When governments pursue policies that favor private investment, the standard of living for workers drops and their social benefits disappear. During the last two decades of neoliberal economic reforms, the income of Mexican workers lost 76 percent of its purchasing power. A recent government survey of family income discloses that the average five-member family has an income equivalent to four times the minimum wage, or about five to six thousand pesos a month. That income is based on three of the five family members working full-time.

"This means that families aren't making enough to live on," explains Alejandro Alvarez Bejar, an economist at the National Autonomous University (UNAM). "It's normal now that young people, when they get married, still live with their parents since they can't earn enough to live independently."

The government estimates that forty million people live in poverty; twenty-five million of them live in extreme poverty, almost all in the countryside. Since 1994, the wealth of the top 10 percent of the population has grown, according to Alvarez, while that of the remaining 90 percent has decreased.

The government crows that liberalization brings investment, which brings jobs, and estimates unemployment at less than 6 percent. But Mexico's new independent union federation, the National Union of Workers (UNT), puts unemployment at over nine million people, or a quarter of the workforce. Alvarez notes that real unemployment is hidden by the informal economy, which includes street vendors, day laborers, and workers in other marginal occupations who can't find regular employment.

Almost half of Mexico's workers lack coverage by its national

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health care system, due to the growth of "illegal" jobs. Companies that—despite the law—pay less than minimum wage and no taxes, health insurance, or retirement benefits, are now estimated to employ over half the country's workers. Meanwhile, government increases in the minimum wage (14 percent in 1998) are more than eaten up by inflation (20 percent in the same year.) As a result, Mexican labor becomes even cheaper on the world market. While each country has its own particular set of circumstances, the impact of economic reforms from country to country is overwhelmingly similar to that in Mexico. In many cases, it's even more extreme.

The two strikes in India were not a unique response in this global debate. The indigenous uprising which toppled Ecuador's government in January also sought to stop privatization, along with the complete dollarization of the country's economy.

In three weeks during February 1999, the Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME) collected 2,700,000 signatures opposing the privatization of central Mexico's electrical grid. "It is indisputable that the move to privatize our electrical system is a condition dictated by the International Monetary Fund, intended to create opportunities for private investment, particularly foreign investment," says Ramon Pacheco, the union's secretary for international relations. By organizing a Front of National Resistance, the union was able to stop the privatization effort but Pacheco believes that the proposal will resurface, since the Mexican government remains committed to neoliberal reforms. "We will only be able to stop these proposals when people in Mexico establish a new government, committed to a different course of economic development," he explains.

Over the last two decades, workers around the world have demonstrated, gone on strike, and engaged in various industrial and political actions to confront neoliberalism and globalization. While U.S. labor has also mounted important struggles against privatization, the state-controlled section of the U.S. economy has always been very small, even compared to other capitalist countries. Nevertheless, "the loss of social benefits in the U.S. is comparable to what's happened to us," says Benedicto

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Martinez, general secretary of Mexico's Authentic Labor Front (FAT). "It's all a product of the same global policy."

In countries like Mexico and India—mixed economies in which socialism was put forward as an eventual goal of economic development—a large percentage of workers have been employed by state enterprises. A majority of Mexican industrial workers worked for the state until economic reforms began transforming its economy in the 1970s, and its organized labor movement had its greatest strength in the state sector.

For countries like Russia and China, where the state controlled the economy completely and employed virtually everyone, the impact of privatization has been even more devastating. The governments of both countries, which formerly guaranteed retirement security and jobs for life, now deny responsibility for both as enterprises are closed and sold. Workers face a bleak future of unemployment and retirees go hungry, selling their possessions when their pensions evaporate.

In the Russian and Chinese industrial heartlands (and in the formerly socialist countries of eastern Europe), whole cities were built around huge mills, mines, and factories. Every social benefit, from subsidized housing and childcare to schools and hospitals, was financed by enterprises that are now being closed or sold to private owners. In Russia, where capitalist transformation is more advanced, millions of workers have gone months at a time without getting paychecks.

What does solidarity mean to workers who face problems like these? This question is a crucial one for any real international working-class movement. The workforces of just three countries now facing this crisis—Russia, China, and India—alone constitute nearly half the world's workers. Efforts to build international labor relationships that do not attempt to answer this question risk being irrelevant.

The AFL-CIO Moves Away from Free Trade and Cold-War Policies

Since the 1995 AFL-CIO convention, when John Sweeney was elected president, the U.S. labor federation has moved closer to

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asking the above question and away from its Cold-War-era support for free trade and overseas U.S. corporate expansion. During the Cold War, past AFL-CIO presidents George Meany and Lane Kirkland not only failed to question the basic goal of U.S. trade policy but gave U.S. labor a role in defending the government's economic and political goals abroad.

In developing countries—from Vietnam to Brazil to Chile to El Salvador—the AFL-CIO subsidized unions that supported U.S. policy and attacked ones that didn't. Sometimes, as in Chile and Brazil, it even helped organize fascist coups, which left thousands dead and entire labor movements in ruins.

Forcing economic reforms and a return to capitalism in formerly socialist countries was as much a goal of this policy as creating favorable conditions for corporate investment in countries in the developing world. Kirkland's high point was Poland. He bragged that the federation had played a key role in toppling its Communist government through support for Lech Walesa and *Solidarnosc.* But Poland was just one of many AFL-CIO projects organized in eastern Europe. The big prize was Russia—the then Soviet Union.

In the wake of Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika* reforms, the AFL-CIO set up an office in Moscow, funneling money and resources to groups of workers likely to break away from the old unions affiliated with the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. As Yeltsin implemented economic reforms, those unions became independent of the government and Communist Party. They were then forced by workers—desperate over unemployment and plummeting incomes—to organize protests against the reforms. Organizations sponsored by the AFL-CIO attacked those efforts, which criticized Yeltsin and the reformers.

Meanwhile, Kirkland and United Mine Workers President Rich Trumka sat on the governing panel for a project intended to privatize Russia's coal industry, close a majority of its pits, and displace almost half a million workers. The project was financed by the World Bank.

When the new administration of current President John Sweeney was elected in 1995, leaders like Richard Trumka said

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the time had come to find a new policy for building international relationships. "The cold war has gone," he declared at the New York convention. "It's over. We want to be able to confront multinationals as multinationals ourselves now. If a corporation does business in 15 countries, we'd like to be able to confront them as labor in 15 countries. It's not that we need less international involvement, but it should be focused towards building solidarity, helping workers achieve their needs and their goals here at home."

Jack Henning, former executive secretary of the California Labor Federation and one of the most vocal critics of the old AFL-CIO Department of International Affairs, noted that "We were associated with some of the very worst elements . . . all in the name of anti-communism. But I think there's an opportunity now to review our foreign activities, to stop the global competition for jobs among the trade unions of the world."

In the wake of Sweeney's election, the activities of the Moscow office changed considerably. It no longer sought to build rival union federations and use them as a labor base to defend Yeltsin. Instead, it began providing more concrete help, training unions to set up grievance procedures and mount legal challenges to employers—working with the old unions as well as the new, independent ones.

Meanwhile, the situation of Russian workers deteriorated so drastically that in 1997 as many as forty million went for months without any paychecks at all. The International Chemical, Energy and Mining union secretariat organized a worldwide solidarity campaign to support Russian miners as they struggled to get paid, and the AFL-CIO participated.

Ending labor intervention that defended the worst effects of Russian economic reforms was an important step away from the Cold War. But some fundamental issues were left unresolved. Are the reforms themselves the problem; are Russian workers better off as a result of the movement toward capitalism, especially the destruction of the state sector of the economy? And if Russian workers and unions choose to resist, and seek change in a political and economic direction, can they count on U.S. labor support? If so, what could U.S. unions do that would help?

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These questions don't just apply to Russia. They lie at the heart of solidarity between U.S. unions and those in most other countries of the world. In the federation's attempt to find a new direction for international labor solidarity, they must be answered. What they really ask is whether the AFL-CIO will challenge the structure of the international free trade system itself, and defend the right of workers to get their countries to withdraw from it.

The Argument over International Labor Standards

Like previous U.S. administrations going back five decades, the Clinton administration seeks to manage a world of internationalized production for rich, first-world markets, governing the system through trade agreements that are forged by developed countries to benefit a corporate elite.

It became clear in Seattle that the government is willing to negotiate over certain abuses of this system and even impose some limits on the most extreme forms of exploitation. But its purpose is to prevent a larger and more profound challenge. It seeks to prevent U.S. labor from questioning or opposing its basic direction and goal: the liberalization of the world's economies.

Clinton told bankers at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, that free markets continue to be the key to international prosperity, but warned them that they had to bring unions and environmentalists to the table. "You have to decide whether you agree that globalization is about more than markets alone," he declared. British Prime Minister Tony Blair was even more blunt. "We have an enormous job to do to convince the sincere and well-motivated opponents of the WTO agenda that the WTO can be, indeed is, a friend of development," he warned.

In Davos, Sweeney responded that "leaders of the corporate community should join the effort to build enforceable laws that put limits on cutthroat competition. It is in the self-interest of multinational corporations and the governments that regulate them to have rules that are agreed upon by all."

Sweeney acknowledged that developing countries are prisoners to unpayable debt burdens but agreed with Clinton that "globalization has tremendous potential to lift people around

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the world. It's creating vast new wealth. But financial crises are growing more frequent and severe, and inequality is rising, as the United Nations reports, both among and within nations. This means that the seeds for rejection of globalization are in every political system, in developed nations as well as developing nations."

In Seattle, Bill Jordan, head of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, told a labor forum that "unless the WTO takes on the call made by the President of the United States for a social dimension to globalization, then globalization will fail."

The failure of globalization, at least in its present form, is exactly what many progressive unionists would like to see. That is because the current trade structure, which the WTO has come to symbolize, enforces conditions on developing countries designed to make their economies more open and attractive to foreign investors.

Rather than challenge this system head-on, the AFL-CIO is proposing a social clause that would incorporate core labor standards into future trade agreements. The AFL-CIO believes those agreements can be written to protect workers' rights and the environment, much as existing agreements protect corporate profits. The federation called upon the WTO to incorporate five international labor conventions into the text of future treaties. These five agreements, adopted by the International Labor Organization (ILO), guarantee workers the right to organize unions and bargain collectively with employers, and would restrict child labor, prohibit forced labor, and outlaw discrimination. They would be enforced by the WTO, which already uses the threat of vast financial consequences against governments that violate existing trade rules.

Juan Somavia, the ILO's secretary-general, says his organization "is putting in place the social ground rules of the global economy." Even Somavia, however, doesn't believe the conventions are a cure-all. "There's no vaccination against the ills of work," he admits.

Nevertheless, Barbara Shailor, who heads the AFL-CIO's reorganized International Affairs Department, which in turn has created the American Center for International Labor Solidarity,

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says that incorporating protections for workers into trade agreements can protect their rights. She compares it to the effort at the turn of the century in the United States to adopt national laws that enforced fair labor standards like the minimum wage and eight-hour day.

"We have to create the political will to get them into [trade] agreements in an enforceable fashion," she asserts. "If we didn't believe it was possible, I don't know why we'd be doing all this mobilizing. There are rules for capital that are successfully incorporated into these agreements, and this is the time and the place to get them for labor."

Putting the WTO in charge of enforcing labor standards is supported by some unions in the developing world, but opposed by others. "Some of our colleagues fear linking trade to labor standards, and fear that labor standards will be used as a tool for protectionism," explains G. Rajasekaran, secretary-general of the Malaysian Trades Union Congress, which nevertheless supports the idea.

H. Mahadevan, deputy general secretary of the All India Trade Union Congress, says his federation has demanded that the Indian government take two steps to reduce child labor: guarantee a living wage to parents, and make education compulsory. The country's present government, however, is beholden to rich peasants who don't want agricultural wages to rise or any restrictions on children in the fields. "But most important," he says, "the Indian government has been fulfilling the dictates of the IMF for many years, and when have they ever been in favor of higher wages? Further, the IMF puts pressure on the government to end subsidies, not to increase incomes, and that becomes an excuse for the government not to pass any laws like the ones we propose."

Mahadevan says his federation wants core labor standards implemented in India, but also says that "Clinton has no business threatening us with economic sanctions." Indian unions would like support from U.S. labor, he emphasizes, but "what would really be useful is if American unions would bring pressure on their own government to stop putting conditions on assistance, like structural adjustment programs, which create the conditions

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for child labor to begin with. Our sovereign rights shouldn't be taken away."

Parents of farmworker families in Mexico would also prefer that their kids have the opportunity to go to school rather than work. But simply prohibiting child labor doesn't provide that opportunity. "We all know that children have to work for their families to survive," says Benedicto Martinez of FAT.

Zwelinzima Vavi, general secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), recognizes that "there is a controversy in the developing South about labor standards. Workers are worried about the loss of jobs, and suspect these proposals are a disguise for protectionism by unions in developed countries." But for Vavi, head of one of the world's most progressive labor federations, the idea is worth a try. "These standards are really nothing new—they've been around for decades," he points out. "The real reason for much of the protest is that everyone knows that the ILO has no enforcement mechanism. The lack of enforcement has itself become a means of attracting investment." He admits that "there is an inherent contradiction in giving the WTO this responsibility. But that doesn't mean that we should drop trade union rights from the overall trade system. It's a struggle."

Supporters of WTO enforcement point out that the labor's side agreement to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) provides a precedent for using the existing trade structure to enforce workers' rights. When NAFTA was negotiated, the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation was also signed; it provides a mechanism for parties to file complaints alleging that one of the three signatory countries (Mexico, Canada, and the United States) is not enforcing its own laws protecting labor rights and standards.

Over fifteen complaints have been filed under the side agreement, almost all against the Mexican government, alleging that workers have been unable to organize independent unions without retaliation and that the country's health and safety laws are not enforced. The complaints have yielded almost no concrete results—no workers fired for exercising their rights have been

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rehired and the one independent union that finally won government registration, the October 6 Union in Tijuana's Han Young plant, has been unable to strike legally or win a contract. Complaints filed in the United States over the violation of labor laws and the victimization of immigrant workers in particular, have also failed to achieve concrete results.

FAT, which has been involved in filing almost all of the complaints, feels that they have put pressure on the Mexican government to be more cautious and have provided an important forum for exposing the violations of workers' rights. Nevertheless, Martinez says that the government has actually placed new obstacles in the path of workers seeking to organize more militant unions, especially at foreign-owned companies. In order to challenge an existing, procompany union, workers now have to file lists of signatures showing their support for an independent, alternative union, along with a statement by the boss verifying that the signatures are valid. "This process just exposes workers who want a change," Martinez explains, "and of course the boss will never sign."

Defenders of the side agreement say that incorporating its provisions into the main NAFTA agreement would give it more teeth. This is similar to the proposal for having the WTO enforce labor standards. The question remains, however: can the same body that has as its primary purpose creating favorable conditions for investment (including low wages, weak unions, and high unemployment) also defend workers against those very conditions?

Prior to the Seattle meeting, suspicion of WTO enforcement of workers' rights grew even more intense in developing countries after President Clinton endorsed the idea. He trumpeted the U.S. passage of an ILO convention on child labor, calling on other governments to do likewise.

Clinton neglected to point out, however, that the convention only banned child prostitution and the most extreme forms of child exploitation. ILO Convention 138, which takes a much stronger prohibition against the labor of children under fourteen, remains unratified by the United States. "One of the main criticisms of the American government is that it has double

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standards," Vavi says. "It hasn't ratified most ILO conventions itself, while shouting about enforcing them everywhere else." (See the article by Martin Hart-Landsberg in this issue for more information on ILO Labor Conventions.)

An additional controversy involves which labor standards should be considered the most important, or core, standards and who will participate in making that decision. There is very little disagreement on protecting the right to organize, for instance, and more around proposals for eliminating child labor. But missing completely are proposals that would treat protection of the state sector, and social benefits and subsidies, as international labor standards.

Missing also are proposals protecting the rights of migrant workers from developing countries, who are working in developed ones. Over eighty million people worldwide live outside the countries where they were born, another product of growing global inequality. Migrants leave their native countries, fleeing poverty that is in great part also a product of economic liberalization.

The remittances of migrants are a large source of national income in their countries of origin, going directly to the families of workers and farmers rather than trickling through the pockets of government and banks. The status of that expatriate population and its right to work is a basic question of labor rights for developing countries.

ILO Convention 142 would require governments to protect the rights of migrants and their families, and prohibit the extreme violence suffered by immigrants in Germany, Spain, France, and the United States. Discriminatory laws like California's Proposition 187, which sought to prevent undocumented immigrants from receiving medical care and education, or the 1996 immigration reform bill, which denied Social Security and other benefits to legal residents, would be illegal.

The AFL-CIO is in the process of developing a much stronger position in defense of immigrant rights. It might consider mounting a campaign for ratification of the ILO convention on migrants, and proposing that it, too, be considered a core labor standard.

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Disagreement among U.S. Unions

Inside the AFL-CIO, a number of unions don't think it's possible to make the WTO enforce workers' rights. "It's like asking the fox to guard the henhouse," says Brian McWilliams, president of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. "There has to be another mechanism outside the WTO to police workers' rights worldwide." He points out that the U.S. government itself has only ratified one of the five ILO conventions, and is unlikely to push the WTO to enforce international agreements it doesn't itself recognize. The dockworkers union owes its existence to international trade, but also inherits a tradition of working-class internationalism from its radical past. It left the CIO in the late 1940s at the beginning of the Cold War, and only rejoined in the late 1980s. Over the decades it has used its power on the docks to defend unions and workers in Central America, Chile, Korea, and South Africa. During the WTO demonstrations in Seattle, it shut down every port on the West Coast of the United States on November 30. While unions that oppose the WTO process are often called protectionist, McWilliams retorts that "we're not against fair trade, we're against free trade." He points out that the definition of labor standards should be broadened to include those that would impact the United States, including the prohibition of strikebreaking, the right to free healthcare, living wages, and protections for the rights of immigrants. As long as the gap in living standards between developed and developing countries exists, he says, jobs will leave high-wage countries, with or without WTO agreements. Therefore, U.S. unions should "take a critical position toward U.S. economic and military policy that plays a role in enforcing that living standards gap," McWilliams emphasizes.

George Becker, president of the steelworkers union, calls the WTO and the trade structure fundamentally flawed. "There's nothing in it for working people . . . There's no way that you can put a comma here or change a word there to make it compatible. It's not our law. Scrap it."

In November, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney signed a letter

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from the President's Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations, endorsing administration goals for the WTO talks, including gaining greater access for U.S. corporations and investors abroad. Sweeney, who sits on the committee with heads of major corporations, said he'd gained assurances from the administration that it would press in return for a working group on labor issues. An AFL-CIO statement calls the commitment "a sharp departure from the business community's previous position that workers' rights are in no way the domain of the WTO," and calls for a hard fight "to make the WTO a more democratic and accountable institution."

The Canadian Labour Congress was blunt in differing with the AFL-CIO approach. "The struggle by unions, social justice groups and environmentalists is about more than just winning a seat at the table, or a 'social clause' or environmental rules," a CLC statement declared. "We're determined to change the entire trade regime."

Sweeney's move stunned many U.S. union leaders as well. Steven Yokich, president of the United Auto Workers, resigned as chair of the AFL-CIO Manufacturing and Industrial Committee in protest. "I'm as cynical as I can be about putting the WTO in charge of enforcing labor standards," he said in Seattle. "It's nonsense."

Yokich noted that his union, together with the ILWU, the Teamsters, and the federal workers union all refused to vote for Al Gore's presidential endorsement at the AFL-CIO convention in October. Gore's unwavering support for administration trade policy was the big stumbling block.

AFL-CIO leaders are obviously concerned about the potential fallout from a big battle with the Clinton administration over trade policy. While it went all-out to mobilize union members to Seattle, the federation faces an uphill battle to get those same members to vote for Gore.

Labor Solidarity and National Economic Development

Labor federations in developing countries propose a large variety of programs for economic development. The more conservative generally support foreign investment and the govern-

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ments that encourage it, even when those governments keep minimum wages at starvation level and suppress the efforts of workers to organize, especially in export industries. More radical unions support programs of national development which seek to protect local industries and keep them in public, rather than private, hands. They support policies that encourage the formation of an internal, national market, based on the rising income of workers and farmers.

According to Mahadevan, Indian labor has proposed such an alternative development plan to its government. "All government programs should be employment oriented," he explains. "There should be a break with the IMF, and the emphasis put on development of local resources. We need land reform, and technology suited to Indian conditions. We have a very big internal market here, with a large middle class, and we should produce for it."

FAT's Martinez says that to win similar changes in Mexico, "there has to be a political change here—things can't go on as they are. There has to be an answer which includes economic development. We're more indebted than ever, despite the fact that our debt has been paid many times over. The Mexican government is simply enacting agreements imposed by the U.S., and as a result, more plants come here because of the advantages they get. These things affect all of us. We have to have a broader concept of solidarity."

The difference in standard of living between the United States and Mexico, which was about three to one in the 1950s, is about eight to one today, according to Mexican senator and economist Rosalbina Garabito. That difference impoverishes Mexican workers, and is the cause of the loss of U.S. jobs as corporations relocate production.

National development programs, however, are the antithesis of the economic framework the WTO enforces. The international institutions supported by the U.S. government, from the WTO to the IMF, do everything in their power to keep developing countries from exploring these alternatives. Those governments which do pursue them become pariahs in the

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international trade system, eventually subject to sanctions, and even called "rogue nations."

"Governments are told that workers' rights and economic development are a zero sum game, that improving workers' lives slows development," Vavi says. "In the pursuit of profit, they are told to remove worker protections, and then use that as an inducement for investment. But development is a wider concept. It includes social development, and the living conditions of the people. An approach which seeks to erode workers' rights and wages undermines it. Development can't coexist with mass unemployment and poverty."

Unless the international trade structure is changed drastically, these national development alternatives will not be possible. Proposing a social clause within that trade structure, even one which limits the prerogatives of foreign investors, does little to support national development less dependent on transnational capital. At the same time, it provides political support to the very institutions that seek to stop it.

"Seattle has presented us with new questions about our relationship with workers and unions in other countries," McWilliams says. "Globalization doesn't affect us all in the same way. In the United States, workers experience runaway shops. In less developed countries, they endure superexploitation, environmental rape and the destruction of their traditional way of life. But the most important thing for us is to deal with the gap in living standards, which is enforced by U.S. political and military power. As long as that gap exists, jobs will leave and superexploitation will continue. So we have to ask ourselves the question—what strategy will allow us to unite the world's workers? That strategy isn't new. We need international workers solidarity. That's the only way we'll be able to stand up to international capitalism."

International solidarity should not only protect the jobs and conditions of workers in developed countries, but should also defend the right of workers in developing countries to pursue economic development in their own interest. That means opposing U.S. foreign policy in areas where it has led to a drastic decline in living standards—whether it's loan bailouts in Mexico, austerity

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programs in East Asia, or economic reforms in eastern Europe.

This kind of international solidarity is at loggerheads with every U.S. administration's economic, political, and trade policy, whether Democrat or Republican. In the end, it is impossible to pursue a solution to these problems if the labor movement continues to avoid potential conflicts with the Democratic Party in the interests of electing its candidate, even when she or he is a free trader. The problem is compounded by the subsidy the AFL-CIO continues to receive for international programs from the U.S. government. There is a basic conflict of interest. Therefore, political independence is crucial. The federation has to be unafraid to publicly criticize imperial policies like the U.S. counterinsurgency program in Colombia, economic and military sanctions in Iraq and Serbia, or the economic blockade of Cuba. These aggressions are the iron fist behind the imposition of U.S. economic and trade policy.

The AFL-CIO left Seattle opposed to China's membership in the WTO and new administration trade agreements with China (the centerpiece of its trade policy). This may be a declaration of political independence, but it's one which lines up with the old China lobby, instead of with those calling for a fundamental reordering of the international economic system.

COSATU's Vavi questions its hypocrisy. He notes that the Chinese government and labor movement supported the liberation struggle against apartheid in South Africa. He asks why China's record on human or labor rights is any worse than many other countries, whose WTO membership and trade agreements the AFL-CIO has not opposed. "We are disturbed by the obstacles to workers seeking to organize independent unions, and limits on the ability to demonstrate freely, and we intend to talk to Chinese unions about these problems," he says.

In Vietnam, where unions have been more militant in defending workers' interests, and the government has backed away from an all-out dismantling of socialism, foreign investment has started to slow. The AFL-CIO did not oppose Vietnam's WTO membership or Cuba's. Opposing it for China is not going to force Chinese unions to oppose government economic policy.

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And saying that solidarity with Chinese labor is impossible because the All China Federation of Trade Unions is not a legitimate union body smacks of Cold-War, China-lobby prohibitions.

Like the old government-affiliated unions in Mexico, the Chinese labor movement has been tied to the government and its political party since 1949. As the government has become committed to economic reforms, those unions clearly face a choice—between old political relationships and fighting for the needs of workers under the guns of privatization and the explosion of sweatshops in the new economic zones.

U.S. unions would obviously like to see the Chinese rely less on transnational corporations as a source of capital for economic development. If they have cooperative relationships based on mutual respect and self-interest, they will have a more receptive audience than they will if they treat people with whom they disagree as though they had no right to exist.

The AFL-CIO's campaign on China's WTO membership won't move workers in either country an inch closer to a common front against transnational corporations. Instead, U.S. workers need to better understand Chinese unions and develop relations with them. Over and over, U.S. workers and unions need to ask ourselves how we can achieve closer relations with workers in other countries, even if we don't agree with all the policies of their labor movements. The first step is opposing the WTO system on principle. The global trade structure is controlled by developed countries, and used to impose an unjust international economic order on developing ones. It is a cruel illusion to expect that same structure to ensure economic justice.

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After Seattle: Strategic Thinking About Movement Building

by Martin Hart-Landsberg

The Seattle anti-World Trade Organization (WTO) actions have justifiably generated a lot of excitement, renewed political activism, and considerable serious discussion on the left about next steps. For the first time in a long time, we are in the position to think and act strategically, with movement-building in mind. In what follows, I evaluate the Seattle experience; examine several political initiatives; explore the relationships among issues, campaigns, and movements; and suggest political criteria and a program of action to guide our organizing efforts. My aim is to help achieve the political clarity and unity necessary to realize the potential of the period.

Celebrating Seattle

The Seattle actions were noteworthy for their inclusiveness and creativity, as people of many different ages, motivated by many different concerns, joined together in opposition to the WTO and the neoliberal policies that define its agenda. Those directly involved in the demonstrations withstood attacks by the police and National Guard with incredible spirit, determination, and solidarity. Demonstrators have done an excellent job carrying the message of those days back to their communities, often to

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large and enthusiastic audiences. Many have published useful summaries and critical analyses of the events.[1]

While we celebrate the battles won on the streets of Seattle, it is important that we not lose sight of the broader social developments that give the Seattle events even greater political significance. The following are among the most important: a substantial and growing number of working people are angry that their working and living conditions have shown little (if any) improvement during this period of economic expansion. In addition, many are coming to understand that this situation is not the result of a natural, evolutionary process (often called "globalization"), but rather of conscious choices that reflect political interests defined primarily in terms of capitalist imperatives. And many are also beginning to realize that working people throughout the world face similar trends and political processes, and that joint action is not only possible but necessary if positive changes in living and working conditions are to be achieved.

The overwhelming majority of people who participated in and supported the Seattle demonstrations would not define themselves as radicals, but their understandings and motivations demonstrate receptivity to a radical understanding of capitalism and socialist-oriented political action. The post-Seattle period thus represents an important and exciting opportunity for those of us committed to building strong and democratic movements for socialism.

At the same time, there is nothing automatic about the future direction of political developments. Most of the teach-ins, both before and after the WTO protests, offered an array of political perspectives, from anticorporate to anticonsumerist to anticapitalist. Some presenters advocated elimination of the WTO; others called for its reform through the incorporation of labor and environmental side-agreements. Calls for defensive struggles to protect labor rights or the environment often mingled uneasily with calls for new forms of living and working in intentional, self-sufficient communities.

Therefore, this period requires—if not demands—that we think carefully about how to respond to the anger and energy people are feeling and expressing. In other words, we need to

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develop a strategic focus that can help us build movements for change that embrace the principles of equality, democracy, and solidarity in both practice and vision. Lacking such a focus, it is all too likely we will miss a highly favorable moment for making real progress towards socialism. However, urgency does not always bring clarity.

A Flawed Strategy: The China Campaign

Concern over deteriorating labor and environmental conditions motivated many working people to oppose the WTO. President Clinton, recognizing the seriousness of this concern, sought to blunt its radical potential by acknowledging it and advocating adoption of a labor study group as a first step towards the incorporation of labor standards into the WTO. A number of activists and groups involved in the Seattle actions have proposed a different response to this concern, one that they hope will strengthen ties between labor and other social groups and popular opposition to the WTO. Their strategy is to direct popular energy into a campaign opposing China's entry into the WTO. Unfortunately, this is a seriously flawed strategy. Such a campaign misdirects the political energy of the period. It is unlikely to deepen an understanding of the nature of capitalism or build a socialist-oriented movement for change.

Shortly before the Seattle meetings, the United States and Chinese governments agreed on terms under which the United States would approve China's entrance into the WTO. These terms said nothing about labor rights or environmental standards. However, for the agreement to have force, the U.S. Congress must first vote to grant China permanent Normal Trade Relations (NTR).

Groups such as Public Citizen and leaders of the AFL-CIO oppose the China deal for a number of related reasons. They consider China to be a "world-class" dictatorship, unfair trader, and exploiter of working people. They believe that China's entrance into the WTO will intensify downward pressures on working and environmental conditions in the United States and elsewhere. In sum, they find the China deal to be symbolic of all

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that is wrong with current globalization dynamics and they are convinced that they can use the momentum from Seattle, as well as public distrust of China, to win the vote against NTR for China and strike another blow against those that support unregulated international capitalism.

Recognizing the potential significance of the China-NTR debate, the *Wall Street Journal*, in a front-page story entitled "WTO's Failure in Bid to Launch Trade Talks Emboldens Protestors," offered a profile of leading progressive voices in the movement to keep China out of the WTO:

> The [WTO] talks' collapse left foes of free trade euphoric. And they left Seattle with a new energy, intent on fighting the Clinton administration's next major trade goal: getting China in the WTO. "China. We're coming atcha," yelled Mike Dolan, master planner of the Seattle protests, as he celebrated the disintegration of the WTO ministerial meeting. "There's no question about it. The next issue is China."[2]

The article quotes a number of people associated with the AFL-CIO making similar statements. AFL-CIO spokeswoman Denise Mitchell said, "The China vote is going to become a proxy for all of our concerns about globalization." The article also highlights the position of Jeff Faux, president of the progressive Economic Policy Institute (EPI), who opposed China's entrance into the WTO because its presence would make it "impossible to get labor and environmental standards." The reason is that China is not only a dictatorship, it is also too big a country to push around.

This strategy of making the China issue our main issue is problematic for several reasons. Most importantly, it encourages people concerned about labor and environmental conditions in the United States to see China as largely responsible for these conditions, not U.S. capitalists or capitalism in general. This leads people to think that the best response to U.S. problems is to force China to change its system, perhaps by adopting U.S.-shaped labor and environmental regulations, and by extension, that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with U.S. capitalism.

These are not abstract fears. A case in point is an article by Robert E. Scott, an EPI economist, which was published in the progressive journal *WorkingUSA*.[3] Scott opposes China's entry in

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the WTO for several reasons, the most important of which is that its statist system does not allow for fair trade. Thus, its admittance into the WTO will result in increased trade problems for the U.S. economy.

Scott proposes three conditions which, if met, would allow him to end his opposition:

> First, the United States should oppose China's WTO membership unless and until China agrees to include enforceable labor rights and environmental standards as core elements of the agreement. Second, the United States should not enter into any trade agreement with China that does not deliver quantifiable commercial benefits. . . . [This requires China to] agree to maintain or appreciate the value of its currency as needed . . . [and] agree to achieve quantifiable, numerical targets for import penetration at the product and industry level, under strict timetables. Finally, all of these agreements must be enforceable through a clearly defined multilateral mechanism. Any changes required to make the WTO structure compatible with the necessary enforcement mechanisms would have to be put in place (p. 87).

There can be no mistaking the politics driving this article. Scott calls not for dismantling the WTO, but for strengthening it by adding labor and environmental standards as well as new enforcement mechanisms for oversight of exchange rates and economic activity in general.

What is it about China that excites such strong demands? While Scott states that China "exploits labor and represses human rights" (p. 83), his attack is primarily directed against the nonmarket features of the Chinese system. According to Scott, "Unfair competition is built into China's economic system" (p. 84). The reason is that China uses "a number of market-distorting government policies, including requirements for technology transfer to domestic firms, local content and offset requirements and import and foreign exchange licensing arrangements" (p. 84).

Significantly, when highlighting the growing U.S. trade deficit with China in key sectors such as computers and telecommunications equipment, Scott points out that China's high-tech exports to the United States are produced largely by U.S. and other foreign multinationals operating in China. He says, for example, "As in the case of computers, the United States exports parts and

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jobs to China's 'export platforms' (foreign-owned factories within China that import parts and export finished goods), and it gets assembled phones in return" (p. 84). Yet, Scott raises no critical questions about the destructive operation of U.S. multinational corporations or the logic of export-led capitalism. His attacks are leveled only against Chinese state policy, and in particular those parts of the Chinese system that appear to deviate from neoliberalism.

No doubt many people mobilized by the events surrounding the Seattle protests could be attracted to the campaign against China's entrance into the WTO. The Chinese government is not democratic, and most Chinese workers labor under difficult and harsh conditions. Moreover, there is little doubt that Chinese workers, and especially farmers, will suffer greatly from their country's entry into the WTO.

Still it is important to realize that the campaign against the China deal is not a solidarity campaign. Comparisons to boycott actions against apartheid-era South Africa or Burma are revealing. In those cases, we had democratic forces within the country calling for trade and investment boycotts as part of their own internal strategy for achieving change.

To date, no independent movement of Chinese workers has called for international support for a campaign to keep China out of the WTO. In fact, even organizations operating in Hong Kong that seek to promote independent labor organizing in China have refrained from supporting such a campaign.[4] Moreover, many militant and independent labor movements, including those in South Korea and Brazil, as well as many third world NGOs, have gone on record opposing the extension of WTO powers to include oversight of labor and environmental conditions. Thus, pursuing a campaign that makes such demands a critical element of its strategy is bound to endanger the international solidarity that was built during the Seattle actions. This accomplishment should not be lightly cast aside.

The anti-China campaign makes sense only if the primary goal is reform of the WTO through adoption of labor and environmental side-agreements. But, such a goal not only undermines

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international solidarity, it also sets back the political development of a socialist-oriented movement in the United States. There is a growing radicalization taking place within the U.S. working class and our efforts should be directed towards deepening the process, not blunting it. A movement that calls for reform rather than rejection of the WTO, and encourages workers to celebrate neoliberalism and pressure other countries to restructure their political economies along similar lines (so as to solve "our" problems) clearly leads in the wrong direction.

We should oppose making China the focal point of our political work. Our response to those who want to know our opinion on this issue should be that the Chinese people would be better off if their country remained outside the WTO, as would the working people of all countries, including those in the United States. That is why we oppose the WTO and seek to dismantle it. Fundamentally, the China-WTO issue represents a struggle among elites in both the United States and China. Our attention and organizational efforts should be focused on developing campaigns that speak directly to workers' concerns in the United States and other countries, and that promote rather than weaken international worker solidarity.

An Alternative Campaign: Ratification of ILO Labor Conventions

There are other more productive ways to respond to the deterioration in U.S. working and living conditions, which keep the focus on U.S. capitalism. One way is to take advantage of the U.S government's rhetoric. The president and most members of Congress, for example, claim to support strong labor rights. Yet their "actions" tend to be limited to criticisms of labor conditions in other countries. We should challenge the president to endorse, and the Congress to ratify, the seven fundamental labor Conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO).

The ILO has adopted more than 180 international labor Conventions. These Conventions, in the words of the ILO, "are international treaties, subject to ratification by ILO member States." The ILO Governing Body has decided "that seven Con-

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ventions should be considered fundamental to the rights of human beings at work" and should be "implemented and ratified by all member States of the organization. These are called Fundamental ILO Conventions."[5]

These seven core labor standards are designed to protect freedom of association and organization (Convention numbers 87 and 98), abolish forced labor (Convention numbers 29 and 105), guarantee equality in employment and remuneration (Convention numbers 111 and 100), and eliminate child labor (Convention number 138). At this time, the United States has ratified only one of these fundamental labor standards, number 105. The ILO notes substantial divergence between U.S. national legislation and four of the fundamental Conventions: numbers 29, 87, 98, and 100.[6]

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) issued a report for the WTO General Council (as part of the latter's review of trade policies) which illuminates U.S. noncompliance with its international commitments.[7] The report notes, for example, that many U.S. workers are denied the right to join trade unions and bargain collectively. "In the public sector approximately 40 percent of all workers—nearly seven million people—are denied basic collective bargaining rights" (p. 2). And in "the private sector, the law does not protect workers when the employer is determined to destroy or prevent union representation" (p. 3). Examples cited include regular, unpunished firings of trade-union activists and the use of permanent replacement workers during a strike. The report also notes that agricultural and domestic workers, as well as certain kinds of supervisory workers and "independent contractors," are not covered by the National Labor Relations Act.

The ICFTU report finds ongoing race and gender discrimination in the United States in both hiring and remuneration and the ongoing use of child labor, especially in agriculture and garment sweatshops. It also finds increased use of forced labor in prisons and in U.S. dependent territories, such as the U.S. commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, where "imported" foreign workers are often forced to work under condi-

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tions resembling debt peonage.

The U.S. record of ratification of these fundamental labor standards is among the worst in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. A campaign to publicize this fact and demand ratification of all seven Conventions has the potential to sharpen class-consciousness and deepen popular understanding of capitalist imperatives. Such a campaign also can promote greater international solidarity between U.S. and other workers. For example, conversations with workers in other countries could help the U.S. labor movement learn more about alternative legal frameworks and how they have influenced, and been influenced by, labor organizing and workplace struggles.

A campaign to ratify the seven fundamental ILO Conventions represents only one possible alternative to the campaign to keep China out of the WTO. I have highlighted it to illustrate the choices we face and the importance of using well-formed political criteria to guide our political efforts. Other campaigns also deserve our support, including those that promote living-wage contracts, the transformation of the public sector, and opposition to sweatshop production and International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank policies.

The Political Challenges of Campaign Organizing

Our challenges extend beyond developing sound political criteria and using them to determine which campaigns have the greatest progressive potential. We also face the challenge of working within our communities to share and win support for our political criteria and choices. For example, opposing the China campaign could lead to redbaiting or charges of sectarianism. More importantly, even when there is general agreement about which campaign to pursue, there is no guarantee that the campaign will realize its potential.

Campaigns are themselves complex political processes. There is no issue so "pure" that it guarantees that the associated campaign will promote grassroots participation; a class-conscious, anticapitalist perspective; and international solidarity. There is

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always the danger that pressures from both inside and outside the campaign will moderate the politics and narrow the focus of the campaign, with disastrous political results.

For example, I have advocated a campaign for ratification of ILO core Conventions, seeing it as a vehicle for movement building. However, such a campaign, if dominated by reform elements, could easily fail to achieve this objective. Organizers could limit actions to postcard campaigns directed at members of Congress; people could be encouraged to see ratification of these Conventions as the ultimate answer to U.S. labor problems. The outcome would certainly be a political dead-end. An examination of conditions in Germany and France, countries that have ratified all seven core Conventions, should make clear that ratification in and of itself has limited ability to challenge and transform capitalist dynamics. Even Guatemala has ratified all seven!

Similarly, some antisweatshop campaigns come dangerously close to presenting sweatshops as an historical anomaly that can be ended by using consumer campaigns to encourage capitalists to change their behavior. As a result, many participants begin thinking in terms of good capitalists versus bad capitalists rather than developing an anticapitalist consciousness. Even campaigns against the IMF and World Bank are divided along fix it/nix it lines, leading to competing political understandings and visions of change.

In short, campaigns can differ in terms of their organization dynamics and political focus even when addressing the same "issue." And, as is true with issues, some campaigns are more likely to promote favorable political outcomes than others. Therefore, we must also give careful attention to the choices we make when organizing campaigns if we are to succeed in building on the promise of this period. Happily, there are historical experiences that can help us develop criteria for, as well as suggest approaches to, successful campaign organizing.

Learning From History: The Example of May Day

An examination of the struggle for a shorter workday, which came to be symbolized by May Day demonstrations and strike actions, has much to teach us about how to organize around

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"reform" issues while simultaneously building militant, national, working-class movements and revolutionary visions. More specifically, the history offers important insights into how to maximize the radical potential of our campaigns and build meaningful international solidarity. It also highlights the critical nature of the relationship between campaigns and movements.

The struggle for a shorter workday in the United States began in the late eighteenth century, even before the establishment of the first trade unions. The goal was the ten-hour day. A key aspect of the campaign concerned the way organizers framed their demand. They argued that the ten-hour day was needed not only to protect the health of workers, but also because the long and exhausting workday was a barrier to more revolutionary change. A circular issued in 1835 by Boston workers advocating the ten-hour day highlights the connection: "We have been too long subjected to the odious, cruel, unjust and tyrannical system which compels the operative mechanic to exhaust his physical and mental powers. We have rights and duties to perform as American citizens and members of society, which forbid us to dispose of more than ten hours for a day's work."[8]

By 1866, although many workers still worked more than a ten-hour day, the labor movement had set its sights on achieving an eight-hour workday. Organizers continued to advance the demand for shorter hours as a necessary step in a longer process of social transformation, not as an end in and of itself. At its first convention in 1866, the National Labor Union (NLU) declared, "The first and great necessity of the present to free the labor of this country from capitalist slavery is the passing of a law by which eight hours shall be the normal working day in all states of the American Union."[9]

The International Workingmen's Association, also known as the First International, issued a similar statement, written by Karl Marx, two weeks later, which said: "The legal limitation of the working day is a preliminary condition without which all further attempts at improvements and emancipation of the working class must prove abortive. . . . The Congress proposes 8 hours as the legal limit of the working day." Noting the fact that workers in both

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Europe and the United States were demanding and striking for the eight-hour day, the resolution continued as follows: "As this limitation represents the general demand of the workers of the North American United States, the Congress transforms this demand into the general platform of the Workers of the World."[10]

One argument used by employers against the demand for a shorter workday was that granting the eight-hour day would disadvantage them relative to employers in other countries. The effective response was to make the demand for a shorter workday an international demand, advanced by national labor movements as they saw best, in a manner that allowed each movement to support and gain support from the struggles of workers in other countries.

The Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada (precursor to the American Federation of Labor [AFL]), which formed in 1881, quickly took up the demand for the eight-hour day. At its 1884 convention, it called for organized efforts to achieve the demand by May 1, 1886, when it planned to conduct massive strikes against employers who still resisted. There were indeed massive strikes that day.

These strikes provide the context for the May 4, 1886 Haymarket Square tragedy. On May 4, at the conclusion of a meeting called to protest police violence against striking workers, a large force of armed police entered the square and ordered the meeting to end. Before any action could be taken, a bomb was thrown into the audience. One of the police was killed instantly; many others were wounded. The police responded by firing at the assembled workers.

Business and government leaders, frightened by the growing strength of the labor movement, took advantage of the Haymarket incident. The police arrested eight working-class leaders and charged them with the murder of the policeman at Haymarket Square, despite the fact that most were not even present at the meeting. They were charged with encouraging the bombing through their speeches. All eight were found guilty in a highly rigged trial; four were hung, one apparently committed suicide.

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The surviving three eventually were pardoned. The Haymarket Martyrs became the symbol for May Day.

In spite of intense repression, the labor movement continued its eight-hour offensive. The AFL, at its 1888 convention, passed a resolution targeting May 1, 1890, as the date for labor to take massive strike action to achieve its goal. Educational and organizational campaigns, including demonstrations, were scheduled to take place in the intervening period.

As in 1866, the U.S. call to action was taken up by the international workers' movement. The Second International was founded in France in 1898. Samuel Gompers, president of the AFL, sent a communication to its meeting in Paris, informing those present of the AFL's strike strategy and asking for their support. A French delegate was preparing to offer a resolution calling for coordinated international actions by workers to win the eight-hour day. In recognition of the U.S. request, he selected May 1, 1890 as the designated day.

Unable to organize a general strike for May 1, the AFL eventually decided on a strategy that called for one group of workers to spearhead the struggle. In 1890, it was the carpenters. Other workers were to strike if they could, but all workers were encouraged to demonstrate their support for the demand. Workers continued to view the eight-hour day as a step in a larger struggle against capitalism. This understanding is captured by the slogan which New York demonstrators displayed on a banner at their meeting: "NO MORE BOSSES—WAGE SLAVERY MUST GO AND THE 8 HOUR DAY IS THE NEXT STEP IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT. THE SOCIALIST COMMONWEALTH IS THE FINAL AIM."[11]

There were more strikes on May 1, 1890, than on any previous day in U.S. history. That day also proved to be an international day of action by workers. Strikes and demonstrations took place in most of the world's main industrial cities. The initial resolution of the Second International calling for action on May 1, 1890, was not intended to establish a May Day tradition. But the success of the day encouraged labor movements throughout the world to maintain that day as their day of collective struggle; May Day

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thus became international workers' day.

In the struggle for the eight-hour day, as in all struggles that are framed to engender vast social change, political differences developed over time. In many countries, the official trade-union movement began seeking ways of undermining the radical significance of the day. Some began organizing May Day celebrations on the closest Sunday so that they would not have to organize strike actions. By the early 1900s, the AFL was even denying that it had any role in the origins of May Day and actively opposed strikes on that day.

The Second International struggled mightily against this trend, officially calling on workers' movements to maintain actions on May Day and, to the greatest degree possible, engage in strikes and organize events that deepened the class understanding and class character of the struggle. But over time, victories as much as defeats—and even more so repression—gradually weakened the movements and traditions that kept alive the revolutionary spirit of May Day. The U.S. government sought to portray May Day as a holiday of foreign inspiration by promoting its own official labor day. In 1955, making clear what was at stake, the U.S. government declared May 1 to be Loyalty Day.

Although capitalists and their supporters no longer fear May Day, activists can still learn a number of important lessons from the history of the struggle for a shorter workday. Among the most important: specific demands for change should be placed in a broader, revolutionary context. Solidarity should be built by highlighting common national concerns and creating a framework for linking national struggles. And, the success of campaigns ultimately depends on the strength of the movements that promote them.

Revitalizing the May Day Tradition

Beyond the value of the historical lessons noted above, May Day remains important in its own right because it continues to offer a unique opportunity for rebuilding a radical movement. First, considerable interest in the history of the day remains. This affords organizers a wonderful opportunity to reconnect work-

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ing people in the United States with the country's history of labor militancy. Discussions of May Day history also provide a useful opportunity for activists to develop criteria for movement-building as well as learn how reformist trade-union politics and government repression can weaken labor activism and solidarity.

The framework for organizing May Day activities can and should be maintained as well. As we have seen, May Day actions sought to combine encouragement for immediate struggles with promotion of a long-term struggle to transform society. In contemporary terms, May Day actions should encourage resistance to current injustices in the workplace and community. But they should also encourage a belief in and commitment to the development of a radically new society. Thus, May Day organizing demands a serious effort to build community alliances.

One of the most exciting aspects of the anti-WTO effort was that it focused people's attention on capitalism and the need to overcome it. For example, individuals and movements engaged in social experiments involving new ways of living—whether through voluntary simplicity or the creation of intentional communities—were motivated to demonstrate against the WTO by the realization that their experiments could not be sustained as long as capitalism, with its drive to commodify every aspect of human existence, continued to prosper.

Their growing opposition to capitalism as a social system has created new possibilities for building labor-environmental alliances with a class perspective. By encouraging representatives from these and other key social movements to plan community-sponsored May Day events and actions jointly, activists can help deepen and broaden such alliances and, in the process, create a social framework within which resistance to the structures and organizational forms of capitalism can be combined with new visions of working and living.

As noted above, the history of May Day also highlights the importance of the relationship between campaigns and movements. May Day actions were organized by worker-community movements, which were in turn strengthened by these actions. As these movements weakened, it became harder for activists to

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ensure that May Day actions retained their radical orientation. Eventually, the day itself lost its social significance. This is an important lesson because many contemporary activists, no doubt buoyed by the success in Seattle, have tended to focus almost exclusively on organizing new actions or campaigns. While these activities are an important way to create connections and inspire future activism, they do not automatically lead to the development of movements capable of transforming capitalism. In other words, we must strive to ensure that our actions and campaigns are part of, and enrich, a broader movement-building strategy.

Building a Movement while Responding to Peoples' Immediate Needs

Successful movement-building involves creating strong, accountable, and politicized organizations; a community-based structure that connects these organizations; and a common commitment to struggle based on a shared vision of the future. At the same time, movements for social change must be responsive to peoples' immediate needs.

There are many ways activists can help build strong organizations within a community-based structure. First, we must take seriously the task of organization-building. This means that campaigns and activities need to be organized in ways that encourage those who participate to join and become active in the organizations that speak to their concerns. It also means that organizations must take advantage of these actions to mobilize and engage their membership.

Second, we must ensure that organizations take internal education seriously. Many church, labor, environmental, student, and social justice groups have been successful at generating participation at events, but far less successful in creating an internal space where members can discuss past actions, expand their political understandings, debate strategy, and participate in planning future actions.

Third, we must unite the many organizations into a community. One way is to create informal gatherings where activists from these organizations can share experiences and develop strategies

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that integrate the activities of their respective organizations into a common project.

All three tasks can and should be combined. For example, activist meetings should help promote greater understanding of, and respect for, the concerns of the various participants and the communities they represent. This understanding and respect should then be integrated into the internal education programs of the various organizations. In this way, people from different parts of the broader community can learn to appreciate the strengths and struggles of others. Solidarity is thereby built from the bottom up, not from the top down. This solidarity makes it easier for organizations to plan common events and actions and to secure broad-based participation from their respective membership.

Successful movement-building also requires the development of a shared vision of the future. This, in turn, requires the development of a clear and well-focused political program of action. Ultimately, it is through political action that trust is built, community is formed, and new possibilities for living and working are imagined and created. If socialism is to provide the framework for achieving human liberation, it must be based on principles of equality, democracy, and solidarity. Therefore, these principles must guide the development of our political program and the proposed actions must, in turn, give these principles concrete meaning and strengthen people's commitments to them.

A program of action must also respond to people's immediate needs. Since capitalism has left many working people struggling for survival, there is no shortage of needs to address. There are also many creative and increasingly successful efforts to improve conditions for working people in the United States and other countries. These include living wage struggles, antisweatshop struggles, and struggles directed at expanding and transforming the public sector. The first effort has already received a lot of publicity, so I will focus attention here on the second and third.[12]

Antisweatshop Struggles

Antisweatshop struggles have considerable potential to ad-

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vance the movement-building process. Beginning in the early 1990s, a number of groups began targeting apparel and footwear sellers such as the Gap and Nike for the brutal labor practices of their subcontractors operating in the third world. The practices highlighted included child labor, unsafe and abusive working conditions, starvation wages, anti-union repression, and intolerably long hours. Antisweatshop activists built coalitions with unions, community and human rights groups, and third-world NGOs, and organized demonstrations and consumer boycotts to demand economic justice for third-world workers.

The efforts of these activists succeeded in bringing visibility to the human dimension of an increasingly complex global structure of production and encouraging consumers to think of their purchasing decisions in more political terms. Demands for change eventually grew strong enough that companies were forced to respond.

The corporate response has so far been limited, however. Some companies have instituted codes of conduct that have led to a decrease in child labor and improved safety conditions. Most have not. All companies continue to resist wage increases and unionization. In general, the leading firms in the apparel and footwear industries have focused their energies on trying to remove the issue from public view through use of the Fair Labor Association (FLA). The FLA was established in 1998 as a result of meetings—convened by the White House—that included companies, unions, human rights, and religious groups. Despite its initial promise, the FLA clearly serves corporate interests. It does nothing to ensure livable wages or acceptable work hours; its monitoring system is corporate-controlled and limited in scope; and its enforcement mechanisms are almost nonexistent.[13] College and university students, who have re-energized the antisweatshop movement, have challenged this corporate attempt at obfuscation most forcefully.

Under the umbrella of the United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), students are demanding that school-licensed products be produced under conditions that are responsive to the needs of third-world workers. This means that workers

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should be paid a country-specific living wage, have the right to unionize without fear of retaliation, and enjoy safe working conditions. While a number of colleges and universities agreed to sign codes of conduct in line with these demands, no mechanism existed to secure corporate compliance. To overcome this problem, the USAS developed its own monitoring organization (with input from third-world human rights and labor groups), the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC). Students are now working to force their respective schools to withdraw from the FLA and join the WRC.

Fired up by the anti-WTO actions in Seattle, students have employed militant and highly spirited sit-ins and lockdowns at schools such as Johns Hopkins University, the University of Michigan, the University of Oregon, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Wisconsin. Some victories have been won. In February 2000, the University of Pennsylvania became the first school to withdraw from the FLA, followed shortly by the University of Wisconsin and Johns Hopkins. That same month, the University of Michigan, the University of Indiana, and Oberlin College agreed to join the WRC.

Student activists also have worked hard to place their antisweatshop work in a broader political context. For example, the Student-Labor Action Committee at Johns Hopkins demanded not only that their university withdraw from the FLA and join the WRC, but also that it agree to pay a living wage to all who work at Johns Hopkins itself (including those employed by subcontractors), and create a shared committee to oversee school labor practices. By April 2000, victories include the university's withdrawal from the FTA and commitment to raise wages for the lowest-paid workers as well as report annually on its compensation policy. The students won strong support from community organizers, local high schools, unions, churches, and the city council. They still hope to make their school the first private-sector employer to adopt a living-wage agreement. This would be no small accomplishment. Johns Hopkins University and Health System is the largest private employer in Baltimore as well as Maryland as a whole.

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The potential of these antisweatshop struggles lies in the fact that they encourage resistance to the corporate dominance of education, promote student-labor alliances, and strengthen international solidarity. They also draw new people into political movements for change.[14]

Public Sector Struggles

The struggle for social justice must be broadened, not only to include more people and to respond to more issues, but also increasingly to directly challenge capitalist institutions and imperatives on both an ideological and material level. One way is to develop new organizing campaigns around the expansion and reconceptualization of the public sector. The ideological struggle over the public sector is of immense importance to the future of socialism.

For historical reasons, most working people cannot conceptualize alternatives to a world anchored in private property. As Daniel Singer explains:

> The ideology of private property is triumphant today neither because people are especially fond of it nor even because the propaganda in its favor is so overwhelming. The campaign is successful because of a void, because of the Soviet bankruptcy and the social-democratic failure. Why fight for something else when it turns out that it is either roughly the same thing with another label or a different, though no lesser, form of exploitation? For social property to be attractive once again, it will have to be perceived as the means to an end, as an instrument enabling the "associated producers" to gain mastery over their work, over their social environment, and thus, in a sense, over their fate.[15]

This fight to reclaim and revitalize notions of the public sector and social property must be waged on both national and local levels and as part of a long-term strategy. As a first step, we should organize in defense of public spending. While living-wage and antisweatshop initiatives help reduce inequality and encourage commitment to the construction of a "society of equals," far more can and must be done through the public provision of essential goods and services, including quality health care, education, housing, and economic security. Therefore, we must fight to

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ensure that adequate resources are progressively obtained and channeled into desired public programs. At the federal level, this means opposing the reduction or privatization of social security and supporting the use of the "budget surplus" to increase social spending.

However, given our goal of social change, our strategy cannot be limited to the defense or even expansion of existing state programs. We must combine support for social spending with a strategy that encourages the transformation of the public sector. In other words, we must begin to make real the notion of social property. This strategy is best directed at state and local government activities and must be based on the creation of a shared political project that involves public-sector workers and labor and community groups.

Education may well provide the best starting point. The public education system in most cities and states is in crisis. Most teachers are underpaid and overworked and feel alienated from the larger community. School facilities are run down and budgets are tight. Moreover, hostile initiatives directed against the public-school system and teachers win growing support from large numbers of private-sector workers. One example of this is the use of standardized tests to shape the curriculum and monitor teacher and school performance.

Working people are victims of these trends. Perhaps the biggest losers are children from working-class families who end up receiving an increasingly narrow and low-quality education. And, of course, belief in the public sector is another casualty.

One response to this situation is to facilitate meetings between public-school teachers sympathetic to radical change and activists from different communities who share a common political commitment. The WTO experience has already helped to identify some participants. The meetings should have a one-item agenda: creating a responsive, engaging, and liberating system of public education.

Participants in the struggles against exploitation, imperialism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and environmental destruction understand that an educational system that helps young people

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develop appropriate values, skills, and commitments will enhance their efforts. Anti-WTO and antisweatshop actions have demonstrated that many students are eager to be involved in political struggle for a better world. Activists thus have every reason to work with politicized teachers and students to create space within the school system for a new, empowering curriculum that reflects and equips students to respond to current challenges. In other words, we must work to redefine the meaning of a public education.

The critical struggle for such a new education ultimately will take place within the school system, which means the leading voice in that struggle must be that of teachers. To this end, many public-school teachers need opportunities to learn more about working-class history and social change and the interplay between these topics and pedagogy. Activist groups of teachers must therefore increase their educational and organizing efforts among teachers while simultaneously helping to build links between the educational community and the broader activist community. One potential gain for teachers is increased community support in terms of dollars and respect. An even greater benefit is the ability to offer a meaningful educational experience to willing learners.

A political push organized in this fashion can create liberated spaces in the public-education system and mobilize people outside of activist circles who care about what is happening to public education. Ideally, the process will slowly transform existing notions of public education. People will generate new expectations for "their" system, including that it function as a democratic and responsive arena for advancing new visions of society, with public-school teachers serving as guardians of the public interest. Similar efforts can and should be launched around healthcare and social services of all kinds.

While there are limits to how far such a process can develop within the existing capitalist system, the experience gained in the struggle should provide people with a greater appreciation of both the benefits to be enjoyed when institutions are organized according to principles of equality, democracy, and solidarity as

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well as the desirability of having an economy based on social rather than private property. This is movement-building that challenges capitalist rationality and puts working people in a position to shape their own social visions.

Of course, all organizing initiatives should be understood as parts of an integrated political strategy. For example, the movement to reshape public education requires the existence of a community of activists that are involved with, and accountable to, democratic and politically mobilized organizations. And at the same time, it is only through efforts to win living-wage agreements, stop sweatshops, advocate for new labor laws, plan May Day activities, and remake the public sector that it is possible to create such a community.

Final Thoughts

In writing about political strategy, it is all too easy to move to the extremes. I hope I have avoided that trap. I do not want to minimize the obstacles to movement-building or overstate them. Rather, my position is that we are in a period of possibilities.

Current economic, social, and environmental trends, as well as the initiatives and struggles highlighted above, strongly suggest that U.S. capitalism is ideologically vulnerable. And this is happening during the longest business cycle expansion in U.S. history; the next recession is bound to expand organizing opportunities greatly. Our challenge is to become better at learning from, and contributing to, ongoing mobilizations and struggles. If we succeed, our efforts may be rewarded by the creation of a movement powerful enough to offer a meaningful challenge to capitalist-inspired policies and practices. And if that movement enjoys relations of solidarity with movements elsewhere, the possibilities become truly exciting.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Doug Henwood, "Reports and Pictures from Seattle," *Left Business Observer* Website, http://www.panix.com/~dhenwood/Seattle.html; Bill Resnick, "The WTO's Nude World Order," *Against the Current*, March-April 2000; and Jeffrey St. Clair, "Seattle Diary: It's a Gas, Gas, Gas," *New Left Review*, November-December 1999.
2. "WTO's Failure in Bid to Launch Trade Talks Emboldens Protestors," *Wall Street Journal*, December 6, 1999.

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3. Robert E. Scott, "WTO Accession: China Can Wait," *WorkingUSA*, September-October 1999.
4. See, for example, "China and the WTO—No Hope in Sight," *China Labour Bulletin*, September-October 1999.
5. "What are international labour standards?" ILO Website, http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/norm/whatare/
6. "Fundamental ILO Conventions," ILO Website, http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/norm/whatare/fundam/index.htm
7. "Internationally-Recognized Core Labour Standards in the United States, Report for the WTO-General Council Review of the Trade Policies of the United States," International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Geneva, July 1999.
8. As quoted in Philip S. Foner, *May Day: A Short History Of The International Workers' Holiday, 1886-1986* (New York: International Publishers, 1986), p. 8.
9. *Ibid*, p. 12.
10. *Ibid*, p. 12.
11. *Ibid*, pp. 44-45.
12. Much useful information on the living-wage movement can be found in Robert Pollin and Stephanie Luce, *The Living Wage: Building a Fair Economy* (New York: The New Press, 1998); and David Reynolds, "The Living Wage Movement Sweeps the Nation," *WorkingUSA*, September-October 1999.
13. For a critique of the FLA, see Medea Benjamin, "What's Fair About the Fair Labor Association? Putting the Fox in Charge," *Against the Current*, March/April 1999.
14. For discussion of the political significance of the antisweatshop movement, see Norm Diamond, "Anti-Sweat Politics," *Science as Culture*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1999.
15. Daniel Singer, *Whose Millennium? Theirs or Ours?* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999), p. 230.

August 6, 2000, marks the tenth anniversary of the sanctions against Iraq. In Washington, DC, on that day, a National Mobilization to End the Economic Sanctions on Iraq is planned. Online flyer at: http://www.nonviolence.org/vitw/pages/96.htm. For more information, contact Kate Reuer, Fellowship of Reconciliation, P.O. Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960; ph: (914) 358-4601. You can also contact Danny Muller, Voices in the Wilderness, 1460 West Carmen Avenue, Chicago, IL 60640; ph: (773) 784-8065. There are antisanctions protests planned at the Democratic and Republican national conventions this summer as well.

August 6 is also Hiroshima Day. On that date in 1945, the first atomic bomb was dropped onHiroshima, Japan. A second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki three days later. In U.S. schools, it is taught that the dropping of the bomb was necessary "in order to save American lives." The secret, however, is that almost the entire military leadership of the United States was opposed to dropping the bomb, and yet Truman proceeded to do so anyway. The reason: to end the war immediately in order to stop the Soviet advance in Asia. Hiroshima thus stands for a double human tragedy: the most terrible event in the Second World War outside the Holocaust itself; and the event that marked the beginning of the Cold War. We recommend the close study of Gar Alperovitz's incomparable book, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

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Defunding the Fund, Running on the Bank

by Patrick Bond

Two ordinarily impenetrable financial institutions—the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank—have finally come into focus for activists, in a way that sharpens what are often fuzzy discussions surrounding globalization and popular resistance. Around thirty thousand protesters joined the Mobilization for Global Justice in Washington, DC, on April 16, 2000, capping a week that began ominously. It started with a chilly and poorly attended Jubilee 2000 USA debt-relief rally on April 9 (controversially addressed by neoliberal Clinton economist Gene Sperling); a protectionist and vaguely xenophobic "No Blank Check for China" demonstration at the Capitol on April 12, which included fifteen thousand workers organized by the AFL-CIO; and dozens of other related events. Auspiciously, in contrast, the bulk of the A16/17 protesters rallied around a call for the Fund and Bank to be defunded (not reformed), just as most Seattle demonstrators had surpassed reformist leadership in relation to the World Trade Organization (WTO). God smiled on the 16th, giving the Mobilization the warmth and sunshine

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denied the Jubilee reformers, and many left Washington convinced that a campaign to attack the funding of the IMF and World Bank is a sensible next step.

Socialists across the world should be heartened. With momentum captured by the Mobilization, rather than by the reformist Jubilee, enormous ideological progress and political maturity can be claimed and consolidated. A16/17 was built upon a militant, internationalist platform and slogan—"Break the Bank, Defund the Fund, Dump the Debt!"—endorsed by a coalition of forces as strong and diverse as Seattle's. The legal rally/march was joined by initially nervous trade unionists, NGO developmentalists, and environmentalists. Skillfully, the Mobilization's official core of left-leaning Washington thinktank and NGO staff—notably, 50 Years is Enough, Alliance for Global Justice, Center for Economic and Policy Research, Center for Economic Justice, the Nader group Essential Action, and Jobs with Justice—helped to merge (at least temporarily) the very different agendas of inside-the-Beltway bureaucrats and grassroots activists. Labor/NGO/green officials have historically wobbled when faced with global political-economy issues, as a result of the disadvantageous balance of forces prior to Seattle, their often-debilitating ties to the Democratic Party, and a faux professionalism heightened by dependence upon bourgeois funders. The AFL-CIO even supported the eighteen billion dollar recapitalization of the IMF in late 1998, after some dealmaking with the Clinton administration.

The activists, in contrast, were anxious to conduct a joyous symphony of Seattle-like lockdowns and street parties to blockade the Bank/Fund Spring meetings. To do so, they introduced a cultural liberation ambience virtually unknown to Washington, utilizing radical participatory democracy and affinity-group cell structuring in strategy sessions and trainings facilitated by striking young talents from the Direct Action Network (DAN). In this milieu, Michael Albert reported,

> The various tactical wings of the movement—whether seeking to get arrested, to militantly protest, to make a public but peaceful statement, or just to learn or teach—worked together marvelously. Diverse tactics did not trump one another. Tension was minimal. Intercommunication was considerable. Coalitions

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> were strengthened rather than dissolving into tactical disputes. There was in-the-street mutual aid, careful planning of venues and events, and pre-demonstration communication of aims.[1]

Results included abundant forms of civil disobedience and 1300 arrests. Unlike Seattle, the one-thousand-strong Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Bloc of black-clad anarchists worked in harmony with those carrying out civil disobedience and had the honor of attracting a police helicopter devoted solely to trailing their movements across Washington on A16. Commitments were made to hone tactics for the upcoming Republican and Democratic National Conventions in Philadelphia and Los Angeles.

But most importantly for our purposes here, the Mobilization drew the economic, social, and environmental concerns of the global South far deeper into the fabric of the U.S. movement than ever before. Granted, the protest failed to obstruct the Fund/Bank meetings, due to the massive police presence. No matter, the combination of thorough preparation and the large size of the turnout in Washington helped raise public consciousness about the Fund and Bank to unprecedented levels; brought sympathetic activists from different constituencies into successful coalition; taught organizers a great deal about Washington logistics (and how they can really be gummed up next time); showed South allies the extent of solidarity possibilities, encouraging them to intensify their own local critiques of the Fund/Bank; and facilitated a long-overdue split amongst development-NGOs (a group of twenty-two conservative organizations under the banner of "Interaction" sent a bizarre, self-discrediting endorsement note to the Bank and Fund).

These protests have set an excellent stage for several years of intense grassroots campaigning across the globe aimed at closing the Bretton Woods twins, thus fundamentally reorienting our understanding of development finance and, in the process, restructuring power relations in ways that could benefit radical political movements across the South. Of course, an activist focus on the institutional forms of global capitalist (mis)management—namely the Bank, the IMF, and WTO—might detract from an understanding of both the capital accumulation process and class-based resistance, and hence lead to partial and imper-

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fect strategic insights about power and social transformation. In addition, a focus on these global institutions might lead us to neglect national and regional issues and areas in which resistance might be more fruitful. "Bond-boycotting" the Bank and defunding the Fund should be supported as integral and unifying components of a broader mobilization for class, gender, ethnic, and environmental justice.

The IMF, the Bank, and Imperialism

In 1944, the Bretton Woods resort in New Hampshire hosted a conference of delegates chaired by Harry Dexter White, representing the U.S. Treasury, and John Maynard Keynes, representing Britain (but more broadly, the interests of the vast majority of countries then in debt). The overarching problem was, simply, the restoration of global capitalist order at a time when capitalists were profoundly discredited (partly thanks to associations with Nazism) or were otherwise in political-economic retreat, and when socialism appeared a dangerous specter, not only because of the USSR's durability but because communist and labor movements were resurgent in Europe. Reflecting the power of U.S. capital, White was able to establish the dollar as the world's primary currency and to construct the Fund and Bank so they could be controlled from the White House and U.S. Treasury.

Although the Fund initially encouraged nation-state exchange controls so as to limit capital flight, the two institutions founded at Bretton Woods would soon reverse that formula by promoting the globalization of capital over the globalization of people. The Fund was meant to balance the accounts of payments between countries (through money exchanged in trade and financial transactions), while the World Bank would make injections of project finance, starting in war-ravaged Western Europe and later in the South. A few years later, the WTO's seeds were sown in the founding conference of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in Havana. But it was only in the late 1970s that the full significance of the Fund, Bank, and GATT became evident; they were clearly institutions that could solidify the

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control of capital in the North over that in the South during a period of capitalist crisis marked by a financial explosion and stagnating wage compensation, intensifying environmental degradation, and the crash of the living standards and cultures in the South. They proved very useful in shifting the costs of various recent international financial crises from the rich capitalist nations onto those less powerful. And they contributed to the collapse of several decades' worth of ordinary people's living standards across the South since the late 1970s, in Eastern Europe since the late 1980s, and in emerging markets since the mid 1990s.

During this period, the Fund and Bank acquired a qualitatively new role—coordination power over both economic policymaking and financial/aid flows in subordinate countries (though still through the overall permission of the U.S. Treasury Department and consistent with the State Department's agenda). Fund and Bank coordination has meant not merely the certification of countries' policymakers as sufficiently promarket (i.e., especially welcoming of currency devaluation, state shrinkage, loss of national economic sovereignty, and inflowing financial, trade, and foreign direct investments, partly to capture privatized assets at healthy discounts and partly just to speculate). From the early 1980s, the Fund and Bank also played a crucial debt-policing role, firming up the weakened balance sheets of those Northern commercial banks and investment funds that were exposed due to the demise of unpopular client-dictators during the 1980s, and then late 1990s "emerging market" stocks, bonds, and property. Fund/Bank bailouts were arranged so that New York, London, Frankfurt, Zurich, and Tokyo banks could recover (and indeed prosper) from 1980s-era third-world debt (which remained on the liability side of borrowers' balance sheets), as well as from the devastation of currencies associated with speculative runs on Mexico (early 1995), South Africa (early 1996 and mid-1998), Southeast Asia (1997-98), South Korea (early 1998), Russia (periodic but especially mid-1998), and Brazil and Ecuador (early 1999).

The negative impact of World Bank and IMF policies was so stark and obvious that professional and intellectual justification

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was required. The protectionist and inward-oriented economic policies of many developing nations were attacked by proponents of a laissez-faire, "neoliberal" philosophy consistent with the liberalizing interests of international financial/commercial capitals. The "Washington Consensus," a market-fundamentalist worldview imposed by the United States through the IMF and the World Bank and supported by associated thinktanks, insisted that the alleged merits (future growth and prosperity) of free-market "structural adjustment" outweighed the enormous short-term economic, social, gender, generational, public health, and environmental costs.

There have been moments of mass popular resistance to the IMF and the World Bank, but these have rarely been coordinated to challenge state power and neoliberalism more generally. At times, third-world nationalism has sounded resurgent, as in Venezuela under Chavez, but up to now resistance in this tradition has quickly fizzled out once Fund/Bank screws were tightened, or worse, has turned inward to repress the left, as in Mahathir's Malaysia and Mugabe's Zimbabwe. More hopeful signs include the emergence of Zapatismo in 1994; Korean workers' fight against IMF restructuring; periodic mobilizations by the Brazilian Movement of the Landless; the graduation of India's National Alliance of People's Movements from world-class protests against dams and genetic engineering to campaigns against neoliberalism more generally; this January's uprising of Ecuadoran Indians against neoliberalism; February's emergence of Thailand's Forum of the Poor at a major (United Nations (UN) meeting in Bangkok; the dramatic April revolt of Bolivians against water privatization; and protests in Chiang Mai, Thailand, against the Asian Development Bank meetings in May. Though none generated conclusive victories, they provide important (if incomplete) lessons for other protest trajectories, alongside recent North-led campaigns to halt the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), ban landmines, halt toxic-waste dumping, and prevent the WTO from launching its Seattle round.

The IMF and World Bank are central to imperialism's reproduction, both in terms of their power to dictate how the poor

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countries will "develop" and their power to displace the effects of capitalist crisis onto the world's poor. They carry out their mandate in a way that entails both universal suffering by subordinate classes and damage to the environment. But in the wake of the April protests, there are prospects for a more sustainable and radical resistance strategy. For even if the Fund/Bank represent merely institutional vehicles (through which crisis displacement and uneven capitalist development are coordinated), they are exceptionally important targets, at least until more serious challenges are generated by shop-floor, community, feminist, and environmentalist protest to local and global manifestations of the mode of production itself. Indeed, campaigning to abolish the Bretton Woods institutions and the interests they serve offers possibly the best focus for global class struggle in all its various spheres that the left has yet witnessed.

Strategic Divergences

There are those, however, who suggest that abolishing the IMF and the World Bank is an inappropriate radical strategy. Some envision the development of a world state. Such a state, the logical consequence of the rapid globalization of capital, would imply the creation of a global working class (and its party). Such a global working class could then contend directly with capital, struggling for environmental protection, wealth redistribution, peacekeeping, and human rights policing. Socialist intellectuals working from the world-systems tradition, social justice philosophy, and "cosmopolitan democracy" theory are advancing such a case. Here are Terry Boswell and Chris Chase-Dunn in *The Spiral of Capitalism and Socialism:*

> The interstate system is the political structure that stands behind the maneuverability of capital and its ability to escape organized workers and other social constraints on profitable accumulation. While a world state may at first be largely controlled by capitalists, the very existence of such a state will provide a single focus for struggles to socially regulate investment decisions and to create a more balanced, egalitarian, and ecologically sound form of production and distribution.[2]

Skeptical, University of Chicago philosopher Iris Young recom-

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mends closure of the IMF and Bank, which "do not even pretend to be inclusive and democratic." Instead, she argues that a "reasonable goal" is reform of the UN, "the best existing starting point for building global democratic institutions. . . As members of the General Assembly, nearly all the world's peoples today are represented at the UN." Moreover, the UN is a site where imperial powers "seek legitimacy for some of their international actions" and where states "at least appear to be cooperative and interested in justice." Likewise, civil society organizations have mobilized around UN events and issues.[3]

The primary problem here is that given the existing and foreseeable balance of international power, hopes for eco-social progress through world state-building are utopian, maybe dangerously so. Far more likely, if this course is pursued, is an expansion of neoliberalism, the universal rule of property, and the commodification of all aspects of daily life everywhere, with consequent destruction of noncapitalist ecological, social, and economic processes, amplified through far more devastating punishment by the "international community" for transgression by oppositional states or popular movements.

Still other socialists insist upon a global regulatory agenda to reign in the power of capital, including the adoption of export sanctions (usually through trade law) against countries where child labor, health and safety, rights to trade-union organizing, and comparable social and environmental problems emerge. This debate is beyond the scope of my Fund/Bank argument (see Hart-Landsberg's article in this issue for a wise critique), but at least one point should be firmly stated here. The first principle of political solidarity entails not promoting the power of an oppressor nation against an oppressed nation, especially without the consent and indeed request of the people most affected. Exceptions include Northern boycotts against goods from (or finance to) apartheid-era South Africa and Burma, where sanctions called for by mass/popular democratic movements translated into a strategic attack on local oppressors. In cases where sanctions do not explicitly link to a mass movement's own liberation, it is strategically absurd to lend legitimacy to international

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institutions like the WTO, Bank, and Fund (as well as powerful Northern governments) for imposition of new controls on what is already a terribly unequal trade, investment, and financing relationship with the South.

A parallel problem emerged in campaigning against the Fund and Bank during the early 1980s reformism that has strengthened, not weakened, the two institutions. Indeed, some in Jubilee 2000 North chapters (the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan) have viewed the current upsurge in protest as an opportunity to lobby for a greater, not lesser role, for the Fund, Bank, and their discredited "Highly Indebted Poor Countries" debt-relief initiative. An impressive Jubilee South initiative emerged from debtor countries in 1999, yet it spends an unfortunately excessive amount of energy and time arguing against the highly conditional, half-hearted reforms that Jubilee Northerners seek, allied with the Pope, Jeffrey Sachs (director of the Harvard Institute for International Development and the mind behind the devastating economic "shock therapy" in Russia in the early 1990s), and bourgeois politicians.

In five areas—environmental protection, gender awareness, transparency, community participation, and post-Washington Consensus economics—reformers can claim limited victories. But those very wins have provided the Bank and Fund a coat of whitewash, barely disguising their complete dedication to hard-core neoliberalism with talk of sustainability—in the process dividing unsophisticated opponents. Empowered by the Bank's plagiarism of NGO rhetoric, some inside-the-Beltway policy wonks (e.g., in the often admirable international advocacy office of Friends of the Earth) are even suggesting a dramatic switch in Bank lending towards sectors like basic education—"Public funds for public good."

How far can such reforms go? The long and ugly history of these organizations suggests not very far. It is now widely acknowledged, for example, that maverick Bank chief economist Joe Stiglitz was fired so that James Wolfensohn could win another term as Bank president from his boss, U.S. Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers, who harbors a longstanding grudge against

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Stiglitz. In April, after writing a *New Republic* article lambasting IMF economists, even Stiglitz's advisory services to the Bank were terminated. Because the central players within the IMF and Bank clearly remain committed to Washington Consensus orthodoxy, and reforms won to date have been profoundly unsatisfying, organizers in the Mobilization for Global Justice could seek and achieve a rare clarity of radical strategic purpose—to defund the institutions or at the very least limit their power. Consider the words of radical third-world guru of international economics, Walden Bello, director of Focus on the Global South in Bangkok, explaining his shift to a pro-abolition position:

> 70 per cent of the Bank's non-aid lending is concentrated in 11 countries, while the Bank's 145 other member countries are left to divide the remaining 30 per cent. Moreover, 80 per cent of World Bank resources have gone, not to poor countries with poor credit ratings and investment ratings, but to countries that could have raised the money in international private capital markets owing to their having investment grade or high yield ratings. In terms of achieving a positive development impact, the Bank's own evaluation of its projects shows an outstanding 55–60 per cent failure rate. The failure rate is particularly high in the poorest countries, where it ranges from 65 per cent to 70 per cent. And these are the very countries that are supposed to be the main targets of the Bank's anti-poverty approach... Rather than expect the highly paid World Bank technocrats who live in the affluent suburbs of Northern Virginia to do the impossible—designing anti-poverty programs for folks from another planet—poor people in the Sahel—it would be more effective to abolish an institution that has made a big business out of "ending poverty," and completely devolve the work to local, national and regional institutions better equipped to attack the causes of poverty.[4]

After the IMF and World Bank are Abolished

Marx once asserted that prior to constructing world socialism, each working class must first deal with its own national bourgeoisie, a position that incorporated a fairly advanced critique of early colonial globalization. Global deconstruction and national reconstruction may be a useful formula with which to begin to conclude. For implicit in the argument sketched out above is that the nation-state requires space out from under the boot of global financial capitalism, especially the spiked heel represented by

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Fund/Bank missions that so decisively squeeze and shift power relations at the domestic level.

And there are no shortage of national-scale class and political struggles. During the late 1990s, mass strikes by national workers' movements shook Nigeria, Indonesia, Paraguay, Taiwan (1994); Bolivia, Canada, France (1995); Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Greece, Italy, South Korea, Spain, Venezuela (1996); Belgium, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, South Korea (1997); and many other important sites of East Asian, East European, African, and Latin American proletarian suffering when neoliberal economic disaster intensified in 1998-1999.

Yet a political warning is clearly in order, this time from David Harvey:

> Withdrawing to the nation-state as the exclusive strategic site of class organization and struggle is to court failure (as well as to flirt with nationalism and all that that entails). This does not mean the nation-state has become irrelevant—indeed it has become more relevant than ever. But the choice of spatial scale is not 'either/or' but 'both/and' even though the latter entails confronting serious contradictions.[5]

However, identifying and confronting such contradictions can best be advanced by building international solidarity to delegitimize, defund, and decommission the Fund and Bank—which will, in the process, raise questions about the politics of scale associated with a more liberatory form of development finance than could ever conceivably be on offer from the Fund and Bank. To consider this argument even briefly entails a review of post-apartheid South Africa's experience. Three universal reasons have emerged in South Africa for nixing the Fund/Bank (there are also reasons drawn from specific project and policy experiences too numerous to explore here): virtually all possible core value reforms in key areas of Fund/Bank eco/socio-economic advocacy have been explored, and the profound limitations unveiled; there is a greater urgency to restore nation-state sovereignty (and hence mere bourgeois democracy, which has also ebbed), mainly through lifting Fund/Bank pressure, than there is time to convince several tens of thousands of hardened Washington economists to reverse the policy advice that has defined

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their worldview since graduate school; and the hard-currency component of Fund and Bank lending should not be required once appropriate conditions are achieved.

This latter argument deserves elaboration—because if local, national, and regional development finance is appropriate, then the technical (not political, moral, environmental) reasons to have a Fund and Bank evaporate. Such was the viewpoint of the African National Congress (ANC) in its 1994 Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), in a sentence won only after much left-wing lobbying—"The RDP must use foreign debt financing only for those elements of the programme that can potentially increase our capacity for earning foreign exchange." (The ANC broke more than one such promise, but it is the principle here that is worth careful reflection.)

The motivation for rejecting hard-currency loans for "development" was the ANC left's fear of the rising cost of repayment on foreign debt, once the currency declines, and the use of hard currency to pay not for initiating a basic education project but instead for repaying illegitimate apartheid debt; importing luxury goods for the rich; and replacing local workers with inappropriate, job-killing, dependency-inducing technology from abroad. In sum, why take a U.S. dollar loan for building and staffing a small rural school that has virtually no foreign input costs?

If real development comes from local resources (only a tiny fraction of basic-need inputs in most developing countries require foreign loans), and if the hard currency needed to import petroleum or other vital inputs can usually be readily supplied by export credit agencies (competing against each other, in contrast to centralized financial power and coordination in Washington), the basic rationale for the World Bank falls away. And instead of relying upon the Fund to maintain a positive balance of payments when fickle international financial inflows dry up or run away frightened, third-world countries that in the future climb out from under the heel of the Fund and Bank could realistically impose Malaysian-style exchange controls and tax unnecessary imports. They would also have more freedom to default on illegitimate debt.

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In short, the South ultimately shouldn't need a dollar-denominated Fund and Bank for development. Indeed, it is probable that only when Washington's institutional power fades that local, national, and perhaps regional development finance officials can reacquire the ability they once enjoyed, a few decades ago, to tame their own financial markets. (Such "financial repression" entailed state interest-rate subsidies, directed credit, prescribed asset requirements on institutional investors, community reinvestment mandates, and other means of socializing financial capital.)

The one remaining point to make is the easiest, most practical answer in this article—is defunding actually feasible? The same question was asked of anti-apartheid financial sanctions advocates, and answered in the affirmative in 1985, just a few years after campaigning became serious. In addition to defunding the Fund through popular pressure on Congress (where an upcoming authorization vote may be a close call)—and indeed all parliaments—to deny further resources, activists returning from A16 began taking advantage of the Bank's extreme reliance upon international bond markets. Nearly 80 percent of Bank funds for lending comes from bonds, making them the most compelling pressure point and local handle for the medium-term struggle. To this end, a "World Bank Bond Boycott"—initiated by Haitian, South African, Brazilian, and many other activists and debt campaigners across the world—was launched on April 10 with help from two U.S. groups, the Center for Economic Justice and Global Exchange. Berkeley City Council offered the initial commitment that its municipal fund managers won't buy Bank bonds. All investors of conscience—pension funds, churches, university endowments, individuals—are being asked not to profit from poverty and ecological destruction by increasing their portfolio's World Bank bond holdings. A frightened *Washington Post* lead editorial on April 11 called the Bond Boycott "crazy." In coming months, activists will prove establishment concerns entirely justified, as they did with the financial sanctions that helped sink the Botha and de Klerk regimes in Pretoria.

The attraction of defunding the Washington institutions, as campaign handles that U.S. and other Northern activists can

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easily invoke as part of a general consciousness-raising exercise about the Fund and Bank, is that it correlates to South campaigns that also aim to weaken, expel, and shut down the Bretton Woods twins. The basis for the growing campaign in Johannesburg, for example, to kick the Bank out of South Africa is that Bank staff have played crucial roles in policies ranging from macroeconomic structural adjustment to the privatization of Johannesburg's municipal services. The more the Fund and Bank are active in a given capital city, the faster local life is reduced to mere commodity circulation. Evicting the Washington economists who work so closely with local compradors is another step in changing the balance of forces in most domestic contexts. But it is also a warmup for the broader, deeper campaign to decommodify and destratify South societies. And for radical economists in the South who link the particular actions and ideology of IMF and Bank missions to the way in which the broader global capitalist crisis of overaccumulation plays out, it is no accident that we can locate both power and vulnerability within the sphere of finance—as Marx, Grossmann, Sweezy, Magdoff, and others have often reminded us.

For socialist activists, therefore, defunding the IMF and breaking the Bank can raise consciousness, dramatically improve global and local power balances, generate new thinking about radical local financing alternatives that lead to "development" independent of imperialism, and contribute to an internationalist solidarity unfettered by controversy over reform of global financial institutions. A16 gave thousands of activists an initial opportunity to run on the Bank and IMF. The followup challenge is to keep the institutions running until they drop from exhaustion.

NOTES

1. Michael Albert, "Assessing A16," *Z Magazine*, April 19, 2000.
2. Terry Boswell and Chris Chase-Dunn, *The Spiral of Capitalism and Socialism* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Reiner, 1999).
3. Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), chapter 7.
4. Walden Bello, "Meltzer Report on Bretton Woods Twins Builds Case for Abolition but Hesitates," *Focus on Trade* 48 (April 2000).
5. David Harvey, "The Geography of Class Power," in Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, eds., *The* Communist Manifesto *Now: Socialist Register 1998* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998), p. 72.

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Where Was the Color in Seattle? Looking for Reasons Why the Great Battle was So White

by Elizabeth (Betita) Martinez

"I was at the jail where a lot of protesters were being held and a big crowd of people was chanting 'This Is What Democracy Looks Like!' At first it sounded kind of nice. But then I thought: is this really what democracy looks like? Nobody here looks like me."

—Jinee Kim, Bay Area youth organizer

In the vast acreage of published analysis about the splendid victory over the World Trade Organization (WTO) last November 29–December 3, it is almost impossible to find anyone wondering why the forty to fifty thousand demonstrators were overwhelmingly Anglo. How can that be, when the WTO's main victims around the world are people of color? Understanding the reasons for the low level of color, and what can be learned from it, is absolutely crucial if we are to make Seattle's promise of a new, international movement against imperialist globalization come true.

Among those who did come for the WTO meeting were some highly informative third-world panelists who spoke on Monday,

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November 29 about the effects of the WTO on healthcare and on the environment. They included activist-experts from Mexico, Malaysia, the Philippines, Ghana, and Pakistan. On Tuesday, November 30, at the huge rally before the march, labor leaders from Mexico, the Caribbean, South Africa, Malaysia, India, and China spoke along with every major U.S. union leader (all white).

Rank-and-file U.S. workers of color also attended, from certain unions and locals in certain geographic areas. There were young African Americans in the building trades; blacks from Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) in San Francisco and Latinos from its Los Angeles local; Asian Americans from Service Employees International Union (SEIU); Teamsters of color from eastern Washington state; and members of the painters' union and the union of Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE). Latino/a farmworkers from the United Farm Workers (UFW) and PCUN (Pineros and Campesinos del Noroeste) of Oregon also attended. At one point, a miner from the South Africa Labor Network cried, "In the words of Karl Marx, 'Workers of the world, unite!'" The crowd of some twenty-five thousand people cheered.

Among community activists of color, the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) delegation led by Tom Goldtooth conducted an impressive program of events with Native peoples from all over the United States and the world. A fifteen-member multistate delegation represented the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, based in Albuquerque, which embraces eighty-four organizations primarily of color in the United States and Mexico; their activities in Seattle were binational.

Many activist youth groups of color came from California, especially the Bay Area, where they have been working on such issues as Free Mumia, affirmative action, ethnic studies, the prison-industrial complex, and rightwing laws like the recent Proposition 21 "youth crime" initiative. Seattle-based forces of color that participated actively included the Filipino Community Center and the international People's Assembly, which led a march on Tuesday despite being the only one denied a permit. The predominantly white Direct Action Network (DAN), a huge

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coalition, brought thousands to the protest. But Jia Ching Chen of the Bay Area's Third Eye Movement was the only young person of color involved in DAN's central planning.

Seattle's twenty-seven-year-old Centro de la Raza organized a Latino contingent in the labor march and local university groups, including MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan), hooked up with visiting activists of color. Black activists who have been fighting for an African American Heritage Museum and Cultural Center in Seattle were there. Hop Hopkins, an AIDS activist in Seattle, also black, made constant personal efforts to draw in people of color.

Still, the overall turnout of color from the U.S. remained around five percent of the total. In personal interviews, activists from the Bay Area and the Southwest gave me several reasons for this. Some mentioned concern about the likelihood of brutal police repression. Other obstacles: lack of funds for the trip, inability to be absent from work during the week, and problems finding child care.

Yet several experienced activists of color in the Bay Area who had even been offered full scholarships chose not to go. A major reason they gave for not participating, and the reason given by many others, was lack of knowledge about the WTO. As one Filipina said, "I didn't see the political significance of it, how the protest would be anti-imperialist. We didn't know anything about the WTO except that lots of people were going to the meeting." One of the few groups that did feel informed, and did participate, was the hip-hop group Company of Prophets. According to African American member Rashidi Omari of Oakland, this happened as a result of their attending teach-ins by predominantly white groups like Art and Revolution. Company of Prophets, rapping from a big white van, was in the front ranks of the 6 a.m. march that closed down the WTO on November 30.

The problem of unfamiliarity with the WTO was aggravated by the fact that black and Latino communities across the United States lack Internet access compared to many white communities. A July 1999 federal survey showed that among Americans earning fifteen thousand to thirty-five thousand dollars a year,

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more than 32 percent of white families owned computers but only 19 percent of black and Latino families did. In that same income range, only 9 percent of African-American and Latino homes had Internet access, compared to 27 percent of white families. So information about the WTO and all the plans for Seattle did not reach many people of color.

Limited knowledge meant a failure to see how the WTO affected the daily lives of U.S. communities of color. "Activists of color felt they had more immediate issues," said Rashidi. "Also, when we returned people told me of being worried that family and peers would say they were neglecting their own communities if they went to Seattle. They would be asked, 'Why are you going? You should stay here and help your people.'"

Along with such concerns about linkage came the assumption that the protest would be overwhelmingly white—as it was. Coumba Toure, a Bay Area activist originally from Mali, West Africa, said she had originally thought, "the whites will take care of the WTO, I don't need to go." Others were more openly apprehensive. For example, Carlos ("Los" for short) Windham of Company of Prophets told me, "I think even Bay Area activists of color who understood the linkage didn't want to go to a protest dominated by 50,000 white hippies."

People of color had reason to expect the protest to be white-dominated. Roberto Maestas, director of Seattle's Centro de la Raza, told me that in the massive local press coverage before the WTO meetings, not a single person of color appeared as a spokesperson for the opposition. "Day after day, you saw only white faces in the news. The publicity was a real deterrent to people of color. I think some of the unions or church groups should have had representatives of color, to encourage people of color to participate."

Four protesters of color from different Bay Area organizations talked about the "culture shock" they experienced when they first visited the "Convergence," the protest center set up by DAN, a coalition of many organizations. Said one, "When we walked in, the room was filled with young whites calling themselves anarchists. There was a pungent smell, many had not showered.

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We just couldn't relate to the scene so our whole group left right away." Another told me, "They sounded dogmatic and paranoid." "I just freaked and left," said another. "It wasn't just race, it was also culture, although race was key."

In retrospect, observed Van Jones of Standing Together to Organize a Revolutionary Movement (STORM) in the Bay Area, "We should have stayed. We didn't see that we had a lot to learn from them. And they had a lot of materials for making banners, signs, puppets." "Later I went back and talked to people," recalled Rashidi, "and they were discussing tactics, very smart. Those folks were really ready for action. It was limiting for people of color to let that one experience affect their whole picture of white activists." Jinee Kim, a Korean American with the Third Eye Movement, also thought it was a mistake. "We realized we didn't know how to do a blockade. We had no gas masks. They made sure everybody had food and water, they took care of people. We could have learned from them."

Reflecting the more positive evaluation of white protesters in general, Richard Moore, coordinator of the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, told me "the white activists were very disciplined." "We sat down with whites, we didn't take the attitude that 'we can't work with white folks,'" concluded Rashidi. "It was a liberating experience."

Few predominantly white groups in the Bay Area made a serious effort to get people of color to Seattle. Juliette Beck of Global Exchange worked hard with others to help people from developing (third-world) countries come. But for U.S. people of color, the main organizations that made a serious effort to do so were Just Act (Youth ACTion for Global JUSTice), formerly the Overseas Development Network, and Art and Revolution, which mostly helped artists. Many activists of color have mentioned Alli Chaggi-Starr of Art and Revolution, who not only helped people come but obtained a van with a sound system that was used by musicians and rappers for the big march in Seattle.

In Just Act, Coumba Toure and two other members of color—Raj Jayadev and Malachi Larabee—pushed hard for support from the group. As a result, about forty people of color were

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enabled to go, thanks to special fundraising and the fact that whites stayed at people's homes in Seattle so their hotel money could be used instead on plane tickets for people of color. (In April 2000, Just Act helped seventy people of color get to the Washington, DC protests against the International Monetary Fund [IMF] and World Bank.) Reflecting on the whole issue of working with whites, Coumba talked not only about pushing Just Act but also pushing people of color to apply for the help that became available.

One of the problems Coumba said she encountered in doing this was "a legacy of distrust of middle-class white activists that has emerged from experiences of 'being used.' Or not having our issues taken seriously. Involving people of color must be done in a way that gives them real space. Whites must understand a whole new approach is needed that includes respect (if you go to people of color thinking you know more, it creates a barrier). Also, you cannot approach people simply in terms of numbers, like 'let's give two scholarships.' People of color must be central to the project."

Jia Ching Chen recalled that once during the week of protest, in a holding cell in jail, he was one of only two people of color among many Anglos. He tried to discuss with some of them the need to involve more activists of color and the importance of white support in this. "Some would say, 'We want to diversify,' but didn't understand the dynamics of this." In other words, they didn't understand the kinds of problems described by Coumba Toure. "Other personal conversations were more productive," he said, "and some white people started to recognize why people of color could view the process of developing working relations with whites as oppressive."

Unfortunately, the heritage of distrust was intensified by some of the AFL-CIO leadership in the November 30 march. They chose to take a different route through downtown rather than marching with others to the Convention Center and helping to block the WTO. Also, on the march to downtown they reportedly had a conflict with the Third World People's Assembly contingent when they rudely told the people of color to move aside so they could be in the lead.

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Yet if only a small number of people of color went to Seattle, all those with whom I spoke found the experience extraordinary. They spoke of being changed forever. "I saw the future." "I saw the possibility of people working together." They called the giant mobilization "a shot in the arm" for those who had been feeling stagnant. "Being there was an incredible awakening." Naomi, a Filipina dancer and musician, recalled how "at first a lot of my group were tired, grumpy, wanting to go home. That really changed. One of the artists with us, who never considered herself a political activist, now wants to get involved back in Oakland. Seattle created a lot of strong bonds in my small community of coworkers and friends."

They seem to feel they had seen why, as the chant popularized by the Chicano/a students of MEChA goes, "Ain't no power like the power of the people 'cause the power of the people don't stop! Say wha'?"

There must be effective follow-up and increased communication between people of color across the nation: grassroots organizers, activists, cultural workers, and educators. We need to build on the contacts made in Seattle and make new ones. Even within the Bay Area, activists who could form working alliances still do not know of each other's existence.

The opportunity to build on the WTO victory shines brightly. More than ever, we need to work on our ignorance about global issues with study groups, youth workshops, conferences. We need to draw specific links between the WTO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and our close-to-home struggles in communities of color (as has been emphasized by Raj Jayadev and Lisa Juachon, editors of *The Silicon Valley Reader: Localizing the Effects of the Global Economy).*

Many examples of how the WTO has hurt poor people in third-world countries were given during the protest. For example, a Pakistani told one panel how, for years, South Africans grew medicinal herbs to treat AIDS at very little cost. The WTO ruled that this was "unfair" competition with pharmaceutical companies seeking to sell their expensive AIDS medications. "People are dying because they cannot afford those products," he said. A

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Filipino reported on indigenous farmers being compelled to use fertilizers containing poisonous chemicals in order to compete with cheap, imported potatoes. Ruined, they often left the land seeking survival elsewhere.

But there are many powerful examples right here in the United States. For starters, consider:

1. WTO policies encourage sub-livable wages for youth of color everywhere, including right here, as well as the privatization of healthcare, education, welfare, and other crucial public services, and cutbacks in those services that allow private industry to take them over and run them at a profit. This, along with sub-livable wages, jeopardizes the lives of working-class people and criminalizes youth in particular.

2. Workers in Silicon Valley are being chemically poisoned by the chips they work on that make such wealth for others. The WTO doesn't want to limit those profits by protecting workers.

3. The WTO has said it is "unfair trade" to ban the import of gasoline in which certain cancer-causing chemicals have been used. This could have a devastating effect on people in the United States, including those of color, who buy that gas.

4. The policies of the WTO, as well as the IMF and World Bank, intensify labor migration around the world by the millions. This, in turn, affects U.S. immigration policy, which exploits, abuses, and terrorizes thousands of men, women, and children every year, both migrant and citizen.

Overall, the WTO is controlled by U.S. corporations. It is run secretly by a few highly industrialized countries for the benefit of the rich and aspiring rich. The WTO serves to further impoverish the poor of all countries.

Armed with such knowledge, we can educate and organize people of color. As Jinee Kim said at a San Francisco report-back by youth of color, "We have to work with people who may not know the word 'globalization' but they live globalization."

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Address to the South Summit

by Fidel Castro

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, and guests,

Never before did humankind have such formidable scientific and technological potential, such extraordinary capacity to produce riches and well-being but never before were disparity and inequity so profound in the world.

Technological wonders that have been shrinking the planet in terms of communications and distances coexist today with the increasingly wider gap separating wealth and poverty, development and underdevelopment.

Globalization is an objective reality underlining the fact that we are all passengers on the same vessel, that is, this planet where we all live. But, passengers on this vessel are traveling in very different conditions.

Trifling minorities are traveling in luxurious cabins furnished with Internet, cell phones, and access to global communication networks. They enjoy a nutritious, abundant, and balanced diet as well as clean water supplies. They have access to sophisticated medical care and to culture.

Overwhelming and hurting majorities are traveling in conditions that resemble the terrible slave trade from Africa to America in our colonial past. That is, 85 percent of the passengers on this ship are crowded together in its dirty hold, suffering hunger,

This is the complete text of President Castro's speech given on April 12, 2000, in Havana, Cuba, at the opening session of the Group of 77 (G77) South Summit. For more information, see www.g77.org.

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diseases, and helplessness.

Obviously, this vessel is carrying too much injustice to remain afloat and it pursues such an irrational and senseless route that it cannot call on a safe port. This vessel seems destined to clash with an iceberg. If that happened, we would all sink with it.

The Heads of State and Government meeting here, who represent the overwhelming and hurting majorities, have not only the right but the obligation to take the helm and correct that catastrophic route. It is our duty to take our rightful place at the helm and facilitate that all passengers can travel in conditions of solidarity, equity, and justice.

For two decades, the third world has been repeatedly listening to only one simplistic discourse while one single policy has prevailed.

We have been told that deregulated markets, maximum privatization, and the state's withdrawal from economic activity were the infallible principles conducive to economic and social development.

Along this line, the developed countries, particularly the United States of America, the big transnationals benefiting from such policies, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have designed in the last two decades the world economic order most hostile to our countries' progress and the least sustainable in terms of the preservation of society and the environment.

Globalization has been held tight by the patterns of neoliberalism; thus, it is not development that goes global but poverty; it is not respect for the national sovereignty of our states but the violation of that respect; it is not solidarity amongst our peoples but *sauve qui peut* (every man for himself) in the unequal competition prevailing in the marketplace.

Two decades of so-called neoliberal structural adjustment have left behind economic failure and social disaster. It is the duty of responsible politicians to face up to this predicament by making the indispensable decisions conducive to the rescue of the third world from a blind alley.

Economic failure is evident. Under neoliberal policies, the world economy experienced global growth between 1975 and

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1998, which hardly amounted to half of that attained between 1945 and 1975 with Keynesian market deregulation policies and the states' active participation in the economy.

In Latin America, where neoliberalism has been applied with absolute attachment to doctrine, economic growth in the neoliberal stage has not been higher than that attained under the previous state development policies. After World War II, Latin America had no debt, but today we owe almost one trillion dollars. This is the highest per capita debt in the world. Also, the income difference between the rich and the poor in the region is the greatest worldwide. There are more poor, unemployed, and hungry people in Latin America now than at any other hard time in its history.

Under neoliberalism, the world economy has not been growing faster in real terms; however, there is more instability, speculation, external debt, and unequal exchange. Likewise, there is a greater tendency to financial crises occurring more often while poverty, inequality, and the gap between the wealthy North and the dispossessed South continues to widen.

Crisis, instability, turmoil, and uncertainty have been the most common words used in the last two years to describe the world economic order. The deregulation that comes with neoliberalism and the liberalization of the capital account have a deep negative impact on a world economy where speculation blooms in hard currency and derivative markets and mostly speculative daily transactions amount to no less than three trillion U.S. dollars.

Our countries are urged to be more transparent with their information and more effective with bank supervision but financial institutions like the hedge funds fail to release information on their activities, are absolutely unregulated, and conduct operations that exceed all the reserves kept in the banks of the South countries.

In an atmosphere of unrestrained speculation, the movements of short-term capital make the South countries vulnerable to any external contingency. The third world is forced to immobilize financial resources and grow indebted to keep hard currency reserves in the hope that they can be used to resist the attack of

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speculators. Over twenty percent of the capital revenues obtained in the last few years were immobilized as reserves but they were not enough to resist such attacks as proven by the recent financial crisis in Southeast Asia.

Presently, 727 billion U.S. dollars from the world Central Banks' reserves are in the United States. This leads to the paradox that, with their reserves, the poor countries are offering cheap long-term financing to the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world while such reserves could be better invested in economic and social development.

If Cuba has successfully carried out education, healthcare, culture, science, sports, and other programs, which nobody in the world would question—despite four decades of economic blockade—and revalued its currency seven times in the last five years in relation to the U.S. dollar, it has been thanks to its privileged position as a non-member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

A financial system that keeps forcibly immobilized such enormous resources, badly needed by the countries to protect themselves from the instability caused by that very system that makes the poor finance the wealthy, should be removed.

The IMF is the emblematic organization of the existing monetary system and the United States enjoys veto power over its decisions.

As far as the latest financial crisis is concerned, the IMF showed a lack of foresight and a clumsy handling of the situation. It imposed its conditions, which paralyzed the governments' social development policies thus creating serious domestic hazards and preventing access to necessary resources when they were most needed.

It is high time for the third world to demand strongly the removal of an institution that neither provides stability to the world economy nor works to deliver preventive funds to the debtors to avoid their liquidity crises; it rather protects and rescues the creditors.

Where are the rationality and the ethics of an international monetary order which allows a few technocrats, whose positions depend on American support, to design in Washington identical

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economic adjustment programs for implementation in a wide variety of countries to cope with specific third-world problems?

Who takes responsibility when the adjustment programs bring about social chaos, thus paralyzing and destabilizing nations with large human and natural resources, as was the case in Indonesia and Ecuador?

It is of crucial importance for the third world to work for the removal of that sinister institution, and the philosophy it sustains, to replace it with an international financial-regulation body that would operate on democratic bases, where no one has a veto right. An institution that would not defend only the wealthy creditors and impose interfering conditions, but would allow the regulation of financial markets to arrest unrestrained speculation.

A viable way to do this would be by establishing not a 0.1 percent tax on speculative financial transactions as Mr. Tobin brilliantly proposed, but rather a minimum 1 percent which would permit the creation of a large indispensable fund—in the excess of one trillion dollars every year—to promote real, sustainable, and comprehensible development in the third world.

The underdeveloped nations' external debt is amazing not only because it is terribly high but also due to its outrageous mechanism of subjugation and exploitation and the absurd formula offered by the developed countries to cope with it. That debt already exceeds 2.5 trillion U.S. dollars and in the present decade it has been increasing more dangerously than in the 1970s. A large part of that new debt can easily change hands in the secondary markets; it is more dispersed now and more difficult to reschedule.

Once again, I should repeat what we have been saying since 1985: the debt has already been paid if note is taken of the way it was contracted, the swift and arbitrary increase of the interest rates on the U.S. dollar in the previous decade and the decrease of the basic commodity prices—a fundamental source of revenue for developing countries. The debt continues to feed on itself in a vicious circle where money is borrowed to pay its interests.

Today, it is clearer than ever that the debt is not an economic but a political issue; therefore, it demands a political solution. It

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is impossible to continue overlooking the fact that the solution to this problem must basically come from those with resources and power, that is, the wealthy countries.

The so-called Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Reduction Initiative exhibits a long name but poor results. It can only be described as a ridiculous attempt at alleviating 8.3 percent of the South countries' total debt. But almost four years after its implementation, only four countries among the poorest thirty-three have gone through the complicated "debt reduction" process, simply to have had pardoned the negligible figure of 2.7 billion U.S. dollars, which is 33 percent of what the United States spends on cosmetics every year.

Today, the external debt is one of the greatest obstacles to development and a bomb ready to blow up the foundations of the world economy at any time during an economic crisis.

The resources needed for a solution that goes to the root of this problem are not large when compared to the wealth and the expenses of the creditor countries. Every year eight hundred billion U.S. dollars are used to finance weapons and troops, even after the Cold War is over, while no less than four hundred billion go into narcotics and one additional trillion into advertising, which is as alienating as narcotics; this is to mention just three examples.

As we have said before, sincerely and realistically speaking, the third-world countries' external debt is unpayable and uncollectable.

In the hands of the rich countries, world trade is already an instrument of domination, which under neoliberal globalization will become an increasingly useful element to perpetuate and sharpen inequalities as well as a theater for strong disputes among developed countries for control over the present and future markets.

The neoliberal discourse recommends commercial liberalization as the best and only formula for efficiency and development. Accordingly, all nations should remove protection instruments from their domestic markets while the difference in development between countries, no matter how big, would not justify

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separation from the only way offered without any possible alternative. After hard negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO), the poorest countries have been conceded a narrow time difference for full access to that nefarious system.

While neoliberalism keeps repeating its discourse on the opportunities created by trade openings, the underdeveloped countries' participation in the world exports was lower in 1998 than in 1953, that is, forty-five years ago. With an area of 3.2 million square miles, a population of 168 million, and 51.1 billion U.S. dollars in exports during 1998, Brazil is exporting less than the Netherlands with an area of 12,978 square miles, a population of 15.7 million, and exports for 198.7 billion that same year.

Trade liberalization has essentially consisted of the unilateral removal of protection instruments by the South. Meanwhile, the developed nations have failed to do the same to allow the third-world exports to enter their markets.

The wealthy nations have fostered liberalization in strategic sectors associated with advanced technology where they enjoy enormous advantages that the deregulated markets tend to augment. These are the classic cases of services, information technology, biotechnology, and telecommunications.

On the other hand, agriculture and textiles, two particularly significant sectors for our countries, have not even been able to remove the restrictions agreed upon during the Uruguay Round because they are not of interest to developed countries.

In the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the club of the wealthiest, the average tariff applied to manufactured exports from underdeveloped countries is four times higher than that applied to the club-member countries. A real wall of nontariff barriers is thus raised that leaves out the South countries.

Meanwhile, in international trade a hypocritical, ultraliberal discourse has gained ground that matches the selective protectionism imposed by the North countries. The basic commodities are still the weakest link in world trade. In the case of sixty-seven South countries such commodities account for no less than 50 percent of their export revenues.

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The neoliberal wave has wiped out the defense schemes contained in the terms of reference for basic commodities. The supreme dictum of the marketplace could not tolerate any distortion, therefore, the Basic Commodities Agreements and other defense formulas designed to face unequal exchange were abandoned. It is for this reason that today the purchasing power of such commodities as sugar, cocoa, coffee, and others is 20 percent of what it used to be in 1960; consequently, they do not even cover the production costs.

A special and differentiated treatment to poor countries has been considered not as an elementary act of justice and a necessity that cannot be ignored but as a temporary act of charity. Actually, such differential treatment would not only recognize the enormous differences in development that prevent the use of the same yardstick for the rich and the poor but also a historically colonial past that demands compensation.

The failed Seattle meeting showed the tedium caused by and the opposition to neoliberal policies in growing sectors of the public opinion, in both South and North countries.

The United States of America presented the Round of Trade Negotiations that should have begun in Seattle as a higher step in trade liberalization regardless, or perhaps forgetful, of its own aggressive and discriminatory Foreign Trade Act still in force. That Act includes provisions like the "Super-301," a real display of discrimination and threats to apply sanctions to other countries for reasons that go from the assumed opposition of barriers to American products to the arbitrary, deliberate, and often cynical qualification that that government decides to give others on the subject of human rights.

In Seattle, there was a revolt against neoliberalism. Its most recent precedent had been the refusal to accept the imposition of a Multilateral Agreement on Investments. This shows that the aggressive market fundamentalism that has caused great damages to our countries has found a strong and deserved world rejection.

In addition to the above-mentioned economic calamities, on occasion the high oil prices significantly contribute to the worsening of conditions in the South countries that are net importers

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of that vital resource. The Third World produces about 80 percent of the oil traded worldwide, and 80 percent of that amount is exported to the developed countries.

The wealthy nations can afford to pay any price for the energy they waste to sustain luxurious consumption levels and destroy the environment. The United States' consumption is 8.1 tons of oil-equivalent per capita, while the third world consumes an average of 0.8 tons, and the poorest among them only 0.3. When the prices rise abruptly from twelve to thirty U.S. dollars a barrel, or more, it has a devastating effect on third-world nations. This is in addition to the external debt, the low prices of their basic commodities, the financial crises, and the unequal terms of reference's negative impact weighing heavily on them. Now, we perceive a similarly devastating situation emerging anew among sister South nations.

Petroleum is a universally needed vital commodity, which actually escapes the market laws. One way or another, the big transnationals—or the third-world oil-exporting countries that associated themselves to defend their interests—were always able to determine its price.

The low prices mostly benefit the rich countries that waste large amounts of fuel and restrain the search for and the exploitation of new deposits as well as the development of technologies that reduce consumption and protect the environment; and they affect third-world exporters. On the other hand, high prices benefit the exporters and can be easily handled by the rich but they are harmful and destructive to the economies of a large part of our world.

This is a good example, which shows that differential treatment to countries in different stages of development should be an indispensable principle of justice in world trade. It is absolutely unfair that a poor third-world country like Mozambique with eighty-four U.S. dollars per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) needs to pay for such a vital commodity the same price as Switzerland with 43,400 U.S. dollars per capita. This is 516 times higher per capita GDP than that of Mozambique!

The San José Pact, concerted twenty years ago by Venezuela and Mexico with a group of small oil-importing countries in the

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region, set a good precedent of what can and should be done bearing in mind the particular conditions of every third-world nation in similar circumstances, although avoiding this time any conditions associated to the differential treatment they might receive.

Some countries are not in a position to pay more than ten U.S. dollars a barrel, others no more than fifteen, and none more than twenty.

However, the rich countries' world, prone as it is to big spending and consumerism, can pay over thirty U.S. dollars a barrel and take hardly any damage. As they consume 80 percent of third-world countries' exports, this can easily compensate for a price lower than twenty U.S. dollars for the rest of the nations.

This could be a concrete and effective way to turn South-South cooperation into a powerful instrument of third-world development. To do otherwise would invite self-destruction.

In a globalized world, where knowledge is the key to development, the technological gap between the North and the South tends to widen with the increasing privatization of scientific research and its results.

The developed countries—with 15 percent of the world's population—presently concentrate 88 percent of Internet users. Just in the United States, there are more computers than in the rest of the world put together. These countries control 97 percent of the patents the world over and receive over 90 percent of the international licensing rights, while for many South countries, the ability to exercise the right to intellectual property is nonexistent.

In private research, the lucrative element takes precedence over necessity; the intellectual property rights leave knowledge out of reach for underdeveloped countries; and the legislation on patents does not recognize the transfer of know-how or the traditional property systems that are so important in the South. Private research focuses on the needs of the wealthy consumers.

Vaccines have become the most efficient technology to keep healthcare expenses low, since they can prevent diseases with one dosage. However, as they yield low profits, they are put aside in favor of medications that require repeated dosages and yield

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higher benefits.

The new medications, the best seeds, and, in general, the best technologies have become commodities whose prices only the rich countries can afford.

The murky social results of this neoliberal race to catastrophe are in sight. In over one hundred countries, the per capita income is lower than fifteen years ago. At the moment, 1.6 billion people are faring worse than at the beginning of the 1980s.

Over 820 million people are undernourished and 790 million of them live in the third world. It is estimated that 507 million people living in the South today will not live to see their fortieth birthday.

In the third-world countries represented here, two out of every five children suffer from growth retardation and one out of every three is underweight; thirty thousand who could be saved are dying every day; two million girls are forced into prostitution; 130 million children do not have access to elementary education; and 250 million minors under fifteen are bound to work for a living.

The world economic order works for 20 percent of the population but it leaves out, demeans, and degrades the remaining 80 percent.

We cannot simply accept to enter the next century as the backward, poor, and exploited rearguard; the victims of racism and xenophobia prevented from access to knowledge and suffering the alienation of our cultures due to the foreign, consumer-oriented message globalized by the media.

As for the Group of 77, this is not the time for begging from the developed countries or for submission, defeatism, or internecine divisions. This is the time to rescue our fighting spirit, our unity and cohesion in defending our demands.

Fifty years ago, we were promised that one day there would no longer be a gap between developed and underdeveloped countries. We were promised bread and justice; but today we have less and less bread and more injustice.

The world can be globalized under the rule of neoliberalism but it is impossible to rule over billions of people who are hungry

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for bread and justice.

The pictures of mothers and children under the scourge of droughts and other catastrophes in whole regions of Africa remind us of the concentration camps in Nazi Germany; they bring back to us memories of stacks of corpses or of moribund men, women, and children.

Another Nuremberg is required to put to trial the economic order imposed on us, the same that is killing—through hunger and preventable or curable diseases—more men, women, and children every three years than all those killed by World War II in six years.

We should discuss here what is to be done about that.

In Cuba, we usually say: "Homeland or Death!" At this Summit of the third-world countries, we would have to say: "We either unite and establish close cooperation, or we die!"

Thank you very much.

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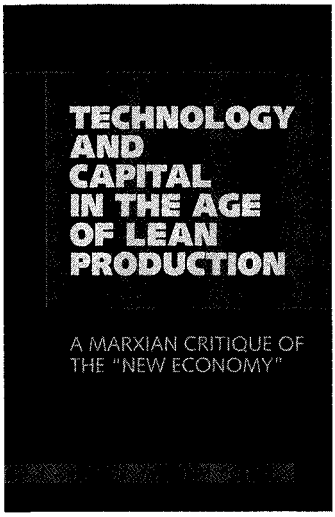

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Among the challenging contributions to this radical tradition is that of U.S. Trotskyism. Its critics have often seen it as sectarian and as idealizing the early Bolshevik experience. Yet Trotskyism attracted women and men of exceptional talent and commitment into a relatively small but surprisingly influential political movement. They made unique and striking contributions to labor struggles, the fight against racism and other forms of oppression, opposition to war and militarism, and the development of Marxist theory and cultural critique.

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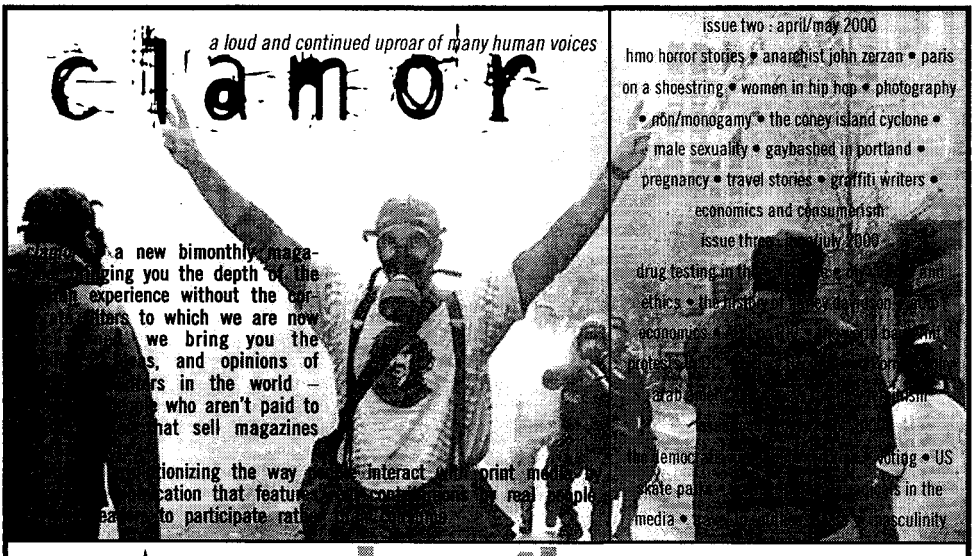

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New and personal alliances were built between the global North and global South.

The media coverage of the events in Washington tended to be atrocious. There were occasional good reports, but they were generally drowned in the sea of corporate media enthusiasm for the status quo. The corporate news media are the property of firms that rank among the foremost beneficiaries of the global neoliberal capitalist regime—and their main advertisers tend to be global players as well—so it is hardly in their interest to promote discussion and understanding of its possible defects. Moreover, the commercial news media have increasingly been pitched to the middle and upper classes over the past two decades and business news has been morphed with "regular" news to the point that the two are nearly indistinguishable. As reactionary as the U.S. press was fifty years ago, it still had hundreds of full-time labor-beat reporters on daily newspapers. Today those positions no longer exist, and the working class has disappeared from the pages of newspapers. Instead, all the main sources journalists look to for stories on economics tend to be stridently in favor of neoliberal globalization.

One of the heartening developments in Washington was the further evolution of independent media (that began in Seattle in 1999) to provide coverage of that which the corporate media ignore or distort. Currently, this coverage only reaches a fraction of the population, so it is imperative for the movement to struggle to extend and deepen the role of nonprofit, noncommercial media in our society. *Monthly Review* and the other left periodicals have much to contribute as well. At *MR*, we see our role as explaining how the world economy works in plain language and illustrating that we can only understand how social problems are interconnected by understanding the nature of capitalism. In our view, the evidence is overwhelming that any humane and democratic solution to these problems ultimately will necessitate eliminating capitalism, the basic cause of the economic, social, and environmental problems of our era.

Young organizations are reflecting on the past few months and making decisions about the future. In New York, for example, the Direct Action Network (DAN) has been negotiating the global/local question (deciding how to connect its anticorporate, global-justice focus to pressing local and national issues like police brutality and the prison-industrial complex); discussing its role in the conventions, given many people's utter lack of faith in electoral politics; and figuring out how to root out internal racism. As we said, these are becoming extraordinary times. We will be paying attention as this new movement develops, so stay tuned.

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(continued from inside front cover)

These are rapidly becoming extraordinary times. One of us has had the privilege of lecturing at nearly three dozen campuses over the past two years, and we can report that there is a vibrant and exciting new, anticapitalist, student left emerging. It is a sophisticated left with strong links to antiracist, labor, environmental, and feminist movements. The change from only four or five years ago is palpable. And we are not talking just about the Madisons and the Berkeleys, but also the University of Dayton and Northern Illinois University. Community colleges and even high schools are establishing antisweatshop groups. How far this left will go is very much up in the air, so we at *Monthly Review* are doing everything we can to fan the flames.

It is amazing what getting off your duff and into the street can do for your morale, especially when you are joined by twenty or thirty thousand like-minded people. You also get a very clear idea about how power operates in an inegalitarian society. In the early 1990s, shortly before his death, the great Ernest Mandel spoke at a U.S. conference on Marxism and was appalled by the defeatism and demoralization he witnessed on the left. "All the working class needs is one victory," he told the audience, "and the blood will return to its veins." Seattle may well have been that victory and, if it wasn't, it will surely come sooner rather than later. The blood is returning to our veins.

The main event so far in 2000 has been the Washington, DC, demonstrations in April. Here is some of what we saw that has not received much media attention.

In the days before the April actions in DC, the police (backed by the U.S. marshals' brutality and secret service agents' disregard for the Constitution), made hundreds of pre-emptive arrests. Activists with a puppet in the backseat of their car were pulled over and had their vehicle searched; others were charged with possessing "instrumentalities of crime" (chicken wire and duct tape); hundreds of people (including at least one journalist and folks on their way home from work) were suddenly surrounded and arrested on Saturday, April 15, and held for up to thirty hours; planning meetings were infiltrated; the convergence center was raided and closed down by the Fire Department (and cops with their badges covered) for alleged fire-code violations; and members of the all-volunteer Midnight Special Law Collective were harassed and intimidated in public and private. This was all done in an attempt to keep people off the streets on the days of mass action and to manufacture fear about the danger the activists posed.

The brutality of the police and, especially, the U.S. marshals has also been downplayed in all of the self-congratulatory rhetoric about "restraint" and the protests being "a win for both sides." During the protests and in the days following, protesters were pepper-sprayed, teargassed, threatened, and beaten bloody on buses and in jail cells. A man who went limp as he was arrested had his finger intentionally broken by his arresting officer. U.S. marshals took thirty men into the basement of the DC jail, threatened them, and hit anyone who tried to look up in the face with a baton. Over and over, protesters heard "there are no cameras here."

The protests, which forced finance ministers to sneak into IMF and World Bank meetings at four o' clock in the morning and caused the police to shut the city down, were effective. And we had conversations with taxi drivers, deli owners, and waiters (many from countries suffering under structural adjustment programs), who encouraged us and considered the struggle their own.

(continued on page 164)

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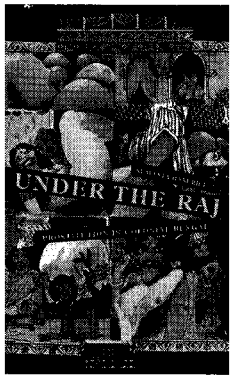

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